A DISCOURSE OF WIT.

BY

David Abercromby, M. D.

Qui velit ingenio cedere rarus erit.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

ALEXANDER MURRAY

OF

Blackbarronie, Esq;

SIR,

I Here offer you not a Transcript, nor Translation, but my own free, and perhaps, not quite ungrounded Thoughts on several Subjects; though I pretend not to impose on any Mans Understanding, my

own irregular Fancies, as inclining more to Scepticism in disputable matters, than to that Bold, and Magisterial air of Dogmatical Philosophers. My chief Design then in writing and publishing this present Treatise, was to furnish the Virtuosi *with matters fit for ingenious Conversations: Which perhaps I have perform'd in some measure, because of the great, and not unpleasant Variety of things it contains. I speak every where*

where my mind with a Philoſophical freedom, neither blaming other mens Fancies, nor preſuming too much upon my own Conceits. And if I ſeem to be ſomewhat Paradoxical on ſeveral occaſions, 'tis more in appearance perhaps, than in realty: for theſe ſeeming Paradoxes, if not overlook't, may appear to an unprejudic'd Reader undenyable Truths, or at leaſt (which is my utmoſt aim) not to be altogether improbable. Of ſuch things

'tis

'tis free to every one to dispute Pro and Con, as it serves his turn, or present Fancy. Wherein I could never conceive any thing of a pedantick Humour, but a very Lawful, and Laudable Exercise of Wit and Ability: which I designedly add, because some, I know, are of Opinion, that all kind of Learning and Ingenuity should be banished from a free and familiar Converse: But I conceive such Men to be either of the dullest

sort

sort, or Epicureo de grege Porcos, *meer* Epicureans, *as taking delight in nothing, but what may please their Senses, or revive the Images of their past Pleasures. Thus some home-bred Gentlemen make a long Story to every one they meet, of what they daily either eat or drink. Others talk perpetually of their Amours, Mistresses, and new Intrigues, and not a few abuse your Patience with severe Reflections on their Neighbours.* But

But ſince you are not guilty of ſuch Irregularities, I had, no doubt, ſome other reaſon, than your Inſtruction, to prefix your Name before theſe Papers. I ſhall then perhaps, offend your Modeſty, but not the Truth, if I ſay it was chiefly the great ſhare you have in the Subject they treat of. 'Tis true, the Antient and preſent State of your Noble Family, and other advantages of that kind might have engaged me to make you this

Pre-

Present, had I been of an Humor to value Men only by their outside, I mean, by what is without them, and not rather by their real Parts, and if I may so say, intrinsecal Nobility. I ow indeed an outward Respect to a Person of Quality, yet I shall pay him no inward Homage, if nothing else recommend him, but the Greatness of his Family; whence you may easily judge, that, how considerable soever you may be in the Eyes of the

World

World on other accounts, I do value you most for what is really your own, I mean your Ingenuity, Discretion, Wisdom; yea, and Virtue too, so seldom to be met with in this corrupted Age we live in. As these Endowments of the Mind are far more taking with me than any other advantages of Fortune whatsoever, so they were my chief Inducements to let you know by this inconsiderable Present, that I am in Realty, and

with

Dedicatory:

without Flattery, which I hate,

SIR,

Your very affectionate Friend and Servant

David Abercromby.

Errata

ERRATA.

PAge 5. l. 24. Read, and the *Grecians*. p. 7. l. 3. in a higher degree, *add*, than others. *Ib.* las ſalt, R. ſalt. p. 9. l. 7. R. ingenuouſly. p. 25. l. 8. not without. p. 28. l. 12. *infuſed* R. miſuſed. p. 30. l. 15. R. Springs. p. *ib.* l. 17. R. or change. p. 35. l. 7. and the former, *&c. add* is free. p. 36. l. 13. R. of moſt knowable things. p. 16. l. 19. R. leſs. p. 39. l. 23. *heightneſs* R. lightneſs, p 45. l. 6. R. the harſheſt. p. *ib.* l. 15. R. affectations. p. *ib.* laſt l. R. if diſſemblingly you admire them. p. 57. l. 15. R. but not any innate indiſpoſition to, *&c.* p. 61. l. 12. R. *had* for have p. 69. l. 23. R. may diſcover *Jovis*, *&c.* p. 71. l. 16. R. reſpect. p. 88. l. 28, *influences* R. inferences p. 97. l. 18. R. *Gordian* knots. p. 231. l. 10. R. *Rugens quærens quem devoret.* p. 133. l. 5. R. certainty. p. 135. l. 24. R. ingenuouſly. p 139. l. 12. R. true Gold without *a.* p. 176. l. 10. R. quicken into Life without *them.* p. 180. l. 5. leave out *may* before *Authors*, and put it in immediately before *have.*

SECTION I.

What is meant by that which Men usually call Wit?

1. *That the things we are most acquainted with, we least understand.*
2. *How few are the true Notions we have of the most obvious things.*
3. *Several specious definitions of* Wit.
4. *Its best and most accurate description.*
5. *That Beasts are not to be denied all sort of* Wit *and Reason.*

THis seemingly improbable, yet very true, that the things we are most acquainted with, we least know. Thus Light, than which, nothing in the whole Creation is more conspicuous, is as impenetrable to the dim Eyes of our Understanding, as 'tis visible and obvious to those of our Bodies. Thus Time

ſo generally known and diſcours'd of, is as obſcure unto me, if not more, than Eternity it ſelf. What more viſible than Colours? Since we ſee nothing elſe; yet if I conſult for reſolutions ſake, Phyloſophers, I ſhall make no more of their moſt ſatisfactory Anſwers, than that they are, (at leaſt to my weak underſtanding) meer occult qualities, *un je ne ſcay quoy*, or I know not what. So far theſe Great Men, though deſervedly reputed not ordinary *Wits*, fall nevertheleſs ſhort, of the true Orgine, and Mechaniſm of the moſt known and viſible Objects. The Wind I feel, and am extreamly ſenſible of, eſpecially when boiſterous, and blows hard; what it is, whence it comes, why it is ſo changeable; and yet in ſome parts of the World ſo conſtant, why it moves ſidewiſe and *Horizontally* (as they ſpeak) and not *Perpendicularly*, or from the Circumference to the Centre on a ſtrait Line, I never yet could reach, and thought always

always the Laudable Endeavours of such as have undertaken to give us an account of those hidden, though most visible *Phinomena's*, altogether unsuccessful.

2. What I have said of Light, Time, Colours, &c. and whatever we are most conversant with in the Works of the Creation, I shall with a no less appearance of Reason, apply to our present Subject: For what the Latines call, *Ingenium* the French, *L'esprit*, the *English*, *Wit*, is a thing so generally known, that there are few but pretend to be acquainted with it, and not to want it, or not to have received as great a measure of it, as the very wittiest sort can pretend to; for nothing more true than this common Word, *Qui velit ingenio cedere rarus erit.* Yet even those, on whom Nature has bestowed it most Liberally, are put to a stand, and know not what to answer, if you press them to determine what in realty it is. But pretending

ſometimes to know more than really they do, and being reſolved to ſay any thing rather than nothing, they will endeavour to put you off with great and empty Words, Splendid Deſcriptions, Tedious Tautologies, affected Metaphors, and whatever may ſeem a ſufficient Veil to their Ignorance. What is it then we commonly call *Wit*? I confeſs, I never either read or heard any thing on this Subject, that looks like a ſatisfactory Reſolution of this Queſtion: And perhaps what I ſhall ſet down here, will prove far ſhort of the thing I aim at. For I am of Opinion, we do ſo little underſtand the Nature of things, that we cannot confidently boaſt yet of any true Notion, or Definition. Yea, I hold that this very Definition of Man, *Homo eſt Animal rationale*, ſo familiar in the Schools, is near as imperfect as this, *Homo eſt Anima rationalis*, *Man is a rational Soul*. My Reaſon for this aſſertion, is becauſe the latter Propoſition

ſition preſents to my Underſtanding nothing but what is in ſome Sence true, though not all the Truth: For a man indeed is a rational Soul, tho' ſomething elſe. The former, beſides its obſcurity, gives me juſt grounds to ſuſpect its containing more than the Truth; I mean, that this rational Soul, which in the Second Propoſition, I conceieve, in a manner free from matter, is really material, as depending on an Organical Body, as to its firſt being, conſervation, and functions. For if you take aſunder this Notion, and conſider it in every reſpect, you ſhall find that this reaſoning faculty, ſuppoſed to be in man, is never exerted without the concurrence of the matter, or of ſome material Phantaſm. The contrary whereof is a prerogative granted only to thoſe perfect Spirits, the antient Phyloſophers called *Dæmons*, and by the *Grecians Angels*, who by the priviledge of their moſt refined Nature, are happily freed

from that groſs and maſſie ſubſtance, which our Souls, how Spiritual ſoever they be, are clogg'd with, in this Mortal Life.

3. I cannot then pretend to give you a true and genuine Notion of *Wit*, but an imperfect, and rude inchoate deſcription thereof, yet ſo general and comprehenſive, that it contains all ſuch Creatures, as without any violence done to the Word, we may truely call *Witty*. Yet ſhall I not ſay with a great Man of this Age, that *Wit* is, *un je ne ſcay quoy*, *I know not what*: For this would be to ſay nothing at all, and an eaſie anſwer to all difficulties, and no ſolution to any. Neither ſhall I call it a certain Livelineſs, or Vivacity of the Mind inbred, or radicated in its Nature, which the *Latines* ſeem to inſinuate by the word *Ingenium*; nor the ſubtleſt operation of the Soul above the reach of meer matter, which perhaps is mean't by the *French*, who concieve *Wit* to be a Spiritual thing, or a Spi-

rit

rit L'*esprit*. Nor with others, that 'tis a certain acuteness of Understanding, some men possess in a higher degree, the Life of discourse, as Salt, without which nothing is relished, a Celestial Fire, a Spiritual Light, and what not. Such and the like Expressions contain more of Pomp than of Truth, and are fitter to make us talkative on this Subject, than to enlighten our Understandings. But what then is *Wit*? *To hold you no longer in suspence*, Wit *is either a sencefull discourse, word, or Sentence, or a skilfull Action.* This Notion, though short, being as you see, disjunctive, is upon this account the more comprehensive: Where ever then you shall meet with Sence in discourse, &c. Dexterity and Skill in Actions; there, and no where else you shall meet with *Wit*. As this is so clear, that it needs no more proof than the Sun needs Light, so I leave it untouch't, and to your own Meditation, as a self-evident Principle, I shall only

ſay, that Sence is ſo neceſſary for meriting the Honourable Name of a *Virtuoſo*, and a true *Wit*; that Men without this advantage are deſervedly not only reputed not *Witty*, but meer Fools, and ſenſeleſs: Yet do I not mean that every kind of Sence in our diſcourſe, allowes our Diſcourſe to be ſtiled *Witty* elſe the number of *Wits* would be fargreater than we are commonly aware of: Yet certain it is, there are but few true *Wits*, in compariſon of thoſe that have Sence enough, not to be meer Fools. We ſpeak then here not of Senſe only, but of Sencefulneſs, neither of a dead, and downright flat Sence, for nothing more common, but rather of a Lively one, as being animated by a certain *Tour* not uſual to the duller ſort. This ſort of Sence is not unlike to a bright and poliſh'd Diamond, the other may be repreſented to us by a *Brute*, and unpoliſh'd one: They are both of the ſame Subſtance, not

of

of the ſame Value, both of the ſame *matter*, not of the ſame *form*, I mean of the ſame Light, Splendour and Brightneſs.

4. As to the other part of this Deſcription, wherein I mention a dexterous or skilful Action as a piece of *Wit*, I confeſs ingeniouſly, I deſign'd by this Addition to declare, that I am not ſo great an Admirer of mankind, as to think that no other material Subſtance, but that which is congenial to my ſelf, may be, and deſervedly too, called *Witty*. Phyloſophers may pretend what they pleaſe, unleſs they prove themſelves *Semideos*, to be more than Men, they ſhall never convince me that they are otherwiſe differenced than in Speech and Figure, from thoſe living Creatures, we call commonly *Beaſts*; and which I have always conceived to be in reality, *Animalia rationalia*, *rational Catures*, but of a lower Rank, and leſs perfect than Men.

Neither

Neither ſhall any Man laugh me out of this Phyloſophy with their innate *inſtinct*, which in the judgement of common underſtanding, is their firſt inward Mover, and the ſole principal of all their Actions. For unleſs you underſtand by this *Inſtinct*, God himſelf, which would be no leſs ſurpriſing, than *Deus e Machina*, and beſides no ſatisfactory anſwer, you will I hope confeſs 'tis nothing elſe but an obſcure and inſignificant Word, invented only to heighten that too vain conceit we have of our own nature, by depreſſing that of other inferiour Creatures. For Men conſidering the wonderful, and moſt skilful, and inimitable Actions of Apes, Elephants, Swallows, Bees, Dogs, *&c.* were loath to allow them to be endowed with ſome kind of Reaſon, as if they ſhould thereby range themſelves among the Beaſts. Yet being forced to give ſome account of theſe undoubted peices of *Wit* we daily obſerve in that lower ſort of living Creatures, they call'd

ſubtily

ſubtily their moſt ingenious Actions, the Products not of Reaſon, but of *Inſtinct*; whereby, if they underſtood nothing elſe, but an inferiour ſort of Reaſon, and in ſome particulars far below that of the more perfect and rational Creatures, they were only guilty of a wilful and affected obſcurity: But if they intended by this harſh Word an entire excluſion of all true reaſoning, they pretend more, than ever they did or could well prove, as I could eaſily demonſtrate, if it had not been done by others. They were in vain afraid already that if they granted once the uſe of Reaſon to other Inferiour Creatures, they ſhould not be ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed themſelves, and far enough removed from their Condition, as if beſides Shape and Speech, the different degrees of Reaſon could not make a ſeparation wide enough between Men and *Beaſts*: For though 'tis moſt true, that, *Simia quicquid agat, ſimia erit*, a Beaſt at

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the beſt will always be but a *Beaſt*: Yet I never underſtood why we ſhould deny ſome ſhare both of Reaſon and *Wit* to ſeveral of thoſe inferiour Creatures, that do things we can neither imitate, nor account for, without granting them, in ſome meaſure, this reaſoning faculty, we would, feign Monopolize to our ſelves. I would not then ſtile him an Extravagant, who ſhould conceive as much Reaſon and *Wit* in an Ape, a Dog, Fox and Elephant, as in ſome Men, though not meer Fools. However no man can deny, what chiefly I here aim at, that *Wit* is not the Prerogative of Mankind alone. A Spiders Web in my conceit, is no leſs, if not more ingeniouſly contrived, than the Weaver's. I conceive in a Honey Comb, with Pleaſure and Admiration, a very acurate, and regular piece of Fortification; the wonderful Texture and groundleſs Foundation of a Swallows Neſt, do repreſent to me more art, than ever I could be yet ſenſible

ible of in the structure of the greatest
Lowers.

SECTION II.

The Causes of Wit.

. *Two different Opinions concerning the diversity of* Wit *in Men.*
. *That it is not occasioned by the respectively greater perfection of the Organs.*
. *That one Soul is really perfecter than another.*
. *Some curious enquirys relating to this proposition answered.*
. *What things may contribute towards the promoting of* Wit.
. *That we cannot improve our* Wit *beyond the innate perfection of our Souls.*

WE are taught in the Schools, that all diversity of Wit in len, does originally spring from

that

that of their Organs. I ſuck't in this Doctrine in my greener years, and beleived it a while, as many others of greater moment, which I have bid a farewel to ſince, in a riper Age: For being naturally curious, and not very credulous, I began to ſhake off by degrees, a certain implicite Faith, I had been for ſeveral years too much enſlaved to; having more than once in my ordinary ſolitude, and retired thoughts, *Neque enim cum me aut porticus accepit, aut lectulus deſum mihi*, called my ſelf to an account upon what grounds I had ſo long ſtood up for ſuch a vulgar Error, I found them all to be moveable, unſtable, and groundleſs; and firſt I thought I was neither conformable to reaſon, nor common Sence, to think that a Soul free from matter and Mortality, as I conceived mine to be, ſhould entirely depend upon a Body, both material and Mortal, eſpecially as to its Chief, and moſt perfect Operations, as undoubtedly

edly those of the *Wit* are. I had another more powerful Inducement not to shake hands with this Opinion, and bid it adieu, which was that I remembred to have been familiarly acquainted with several, both at home and abroad, who had no visible defect in the Organs of their Bodies, and yet were most deficient, as to the endowments of the Mind. And on the contrary, I have known not a few, who, if you regard only their out-side, may look upon Nature as a cruel Step-mother, as having received from her no sensible marks of a Motherly Benevolence; yet if taing them by another Byas, you consider their Abilities, you shall, I am perswaded, instantly confess, that they are more obliged to Nature, or God rather, than most of those who have received in a larger measure, those exteriour Ornaments and Gifts of Beauty. For why may we not reckon the sharpness of their *Wit*, and other advantages of their Souls to be more

than

a ſufficient Compenſation for ſome outward Imperfections of their Bodies. Thus it happens ſometimes, that Blind Men are clearer ſighted than many of thoſe who make uſe of both their Eyes. I had the luck to to be acquainted with one of this Number in *Germany*, whom I judged the moſt extemporary *Wit* I ever met with. I remember I was once curious to know what he thought of Black, Red, White, and other Colours, his anſwer was, he fram'd to himſelf the ſame *idea* of ſuch things that we frame to our ſelves of occult qualities.

2. Thus all things impartially weighed on each ſide, I could not aſcribe thoſe differences and manifold degrees of *Wit* we obſerve among the generality of Men, to any other Cauſe with a greater appearance of Truth, than to the different perfections of their Souls: For meditating ſometimes upon the grounds of this common Word, *quantum homo homini præſtat*, how

how much one man surpasseth another in Vivacity, sharpness, penitrancy, and other intellectual Endowments. I was inclined to believe some things among those *Imperfect Spirits*, for such are the Souls of Men, as being each of them but a part of the whole Man, answerable to what Divinity will needs have us to admit, among those perfect Spirits, we call Angels. I was inclined I say, to think that there are different *Species* or *Hierarchies* of Souls, as well as of other created Spirits. For I conceive an Angel, and I believe the School Divines will not give me the lye, to be farther distant from the perfection of a Cherubim, or Seraphim, than a Lyon, or any other inferiour Creature is from that of a Man. Now the reason of this great variety in that superiour Spiritual Nature, establisheth the same, or not an unlike one in the Souls of Men. The Divines then say, that if God had created but one sort of things, or one

single

ſingle Species, he had not given us ſo very Illuſtrious Marks of his Power, and Wiſdom; and conſequently had bin leſs glorifyed by us. Undoubtedly then a *Specifical* variety of Spirits, as they ſpeak in the Schools, muſt needs be a greater manifeſtation of his Glory, than, to borrow this other Scholaſtick Expreſſion, a meer numerical one. We may diſcourſe after the ſame manner of our Souls. For as the great diverſity of Bodies furniſheth us with a nobler *Idea* of Gods Power, than if he had created but one kind, or all of one Texture; ſo if I ſuppoſe different *Species*, and *Hierarchies* of Souls as of Angels, I frame, no doubt, a higher conceit of his perfections. Yet notwithſtanding all this, you ſhall not be allowed hence to infer, that there are different Species of Men: For this Denomination we take from what is moſt obvious to our Senſes, that is from the Bodies. In which we can obſerve no ſuch difference, as we may eaſily take notice of between a Horſe

Horſe and a Lion, a Lion, an Ape, and a Bird, &c. this Doctrine will raiſe in our minds a great Reſpect and Veneration for Men of greater Abilities than we know our ſelves to be of; for we ſhall conceive their Souls are in a higher order, as indeed they are, and conſequently pay to them a due and proportionable Homage, as Angels do Honour and Eſteem Archangels, and Archangels likewiſe *Powers*, *Thrones*, &c. But I muſt needs here, for your further ſatisfaction, anſwer ſome curious inquiries about this matter.

1. How comes it to paſs that a moſt perfect Soul is ſometimes lodged in a moſt defectuous Body? I anſwer, this happens againſt the intention of Nature: for Nature delights in proportion, and reaſon teacheth us, there ſhould be ſome proportion between the Beauty of the Soul, and that of the Body it lodgeth in, as the Statelieſt *Pallaces* are ordinarily the dwelling places of the greateſt

Princes

Princes. 2. Are not the nobleſt Souls more ordinarily lodged in beautiful Bodies? I anſwer they are; for the reaſon above mentioned, and 'tis by accident, if perhaps the contrary happeneth. But theſe are the ſolutions of a meer *Naturaliſt*, or of one that favours too much Nature. I anſwer then in Second Inſtance, we muſt ſearch after the true cauſe of ſuch ſurprizing contingencies in the firſt cauſe of all things, I mean in God himſelf, who may do, and does ſometimes, what, to our weak Judgements, Nature neither ſeems to deſire nor require. 3. Doth it never happen that a Soul of the firſt or ſecond Order, that is a moſt perfect one, is ſo diſabled, during its ſtay in a corruptible Body, as never to diſcover its natural abilities? I anſwer 'tis not likely that ſuch a caſe ſhou'd ever happen, or if it does, this is, as I was ſaying before, againſt the intention of Nature, tho' not of the Author of Nature, and a meer chance occaſion'd by ſome conſide-

ſiderable defect of our Organs, which the Soul, how perfect ſoever, is not able to ſupply, becauſe it wants a fit and convenient matter to work upon. But hence ſome that take notice but of few things, and conſequently are eaſily miſtaken, may conclude the contrary of what I intend to aſſert, that the various degrees of *Wit* depend on the diverſity of our Organs; which cannot be Lawfully inferred from what I have ſaid, for as if we place the moſt imperfect Soul, that is one of the Loweſt Order, in the moſt compleat Body can be imagined, it ſhall never for all this, tranſcend its own dull nature, and by conſequence ſhall operate but very imperfectly, ſo if we conceive the Nobleſt Soul that ever God created in a Body moſt imperfect, that is, deſtitute of neceſſary Organs, or having but the Rudiments of true Organs, it ſhall never do what otherwiſe it had been able to perform, becauſe it cannot diſcover to us its abilities in this

Life

Life, but by these material instruments, nor *operate* to any perfection if they be wanting, or notably defective. Which argued only Imperfection in the Instruments, not in the principal Agent. Thus the defects we observe in a meer fool, are not really in his Soul, but occasioned by the overthrow of those parts of his Body, without which he cannot utter himself rationally. Whensoever then I perceive by all the most visible signs of Health, and good Texture, two Bodies equally Sound, Perfect, and Acomplisht, and yet a notable difference between the two Persons to whom those Bodies belong; a notable difference I say as to their Intellectuals, I mean Judgement, Sence, Sharpness and *Wit*, I conclude instantly without further deliberation, and perhaps without Error too, that the one hath a Soul of a Lower Rank, and the other of a Higher.

3. Yo

3. Yet I acknowledge willingly there may be other Inferiour Causes, that contribute not a litle to the increase of *Wit*: For how perfect soever we conceive the Soul to be, she requires still the help both of Vital and Animal Spirits. And if these be but too few, or not lively enough, you shall find her slow, dull and heavy. 'Tis not then an unwholsome Advice to all such as are sensible they have received from above, *Animam bonam*, a not very imperfect Soul; to conserve with all possible care the necessary Instruments of her most Spiritual Operations; I mean not to consume by excessive Venery, excessive Drink, or any other kind of Surfeit those Spirits, without which their Souls, though never so perfect, will act but very imperfectly, and far below that degree of perfection God hath allowed them. Upon this account, a sober Dyet, or temperate Life is the best Preserver both of *Wit* and Health; for nothing more true

than

than this common Word *Vinum moderate ſumptum acuit ingenium*, Wine doth not only ſtrengthen the Stomack but likewiſe quickens the Spirits, if moderately made uſe of; as on the contrary it weakens the Stomack, and darkens the Underſtanding, if taken exceſſively, or beyond a proportionable meaſure.

4. There is as yet another greater Promoter of *Wit*, we muſt not forget, which is to converſe often, and keep Company with thoſe that are really Ingenious and *Witty*: For though your Soul, perhaps, be of the higheſt *Hierarchy*, yet it moves not it ſelf eaſily, unleſs it be firſt moved; it muſt then be rouz'd up, and awakened by the Company of thoſe who can inſenſibly improve thoſe real Talents God has vouchſafed to beſtow upon it: For as we may boldly judge of a Mans Temper, or good Humour, of his good or bad Morals, if once we are informed what Company he moſt frequents; ſo likewiſe we may

gueſs

gueſs at his intellectuals by the Capacity, and Abilities of ſuch as he is moſt converſant with. For experience has taught us more than once, that ingenious Men become at length dull and heavy, by frequenting too much the duller ſort; whereof I think this account may be given without ſome ſhew of probability. Ingenious Men have need of ſome conſiderable encouragement to diſplay thoſe Talents they have received from above. Now neither eſteeming nor valuing much the Eſteem of mean Capacities, they fall in a manner, in a certain Lethargy, and are not able to rouze up their Spirits for want of ſufficient inducements. And this often happening, begets in them a habit, they cannot eaſily be afterwards rid of.

5. On the contrary, nothing improves us more than a frequent converſe with the wittieſt ſort, as daily Experience ſheweth; and the cuſtome of the Ancient Phyloſophers,

who travelled all the World over, to ſee and hear the Learnedſt Men of their times; which example is followed in this very age we live in by moſt Nations of *Europe*, the *Scots* eſpecially, and the *Germans*, and by the *Engliſh* of late, who, for the moſt part, become not only ſmoother, and more polite by their travelling into Forreign Countries, but ſharper too, and *Wittier*; as every one may eaſily obſerve, who will be at the pains to compare a meerly home-bread Gentleman, with one that has either lived abroad, or convers'd much with Strangers, eſpecially the ingenuous ſort at home: I look upon the former as a meer Clown, deſtitute of that Delicacy of *Wit*, and diſcerning Faculty, you ſhall find upon occaſion in the latter. But all this is to be underſtood *cum grano ſalis*, in this ſuppoſition that you have not a Soul of the loweſt Rank, but one that may hold in the *Hierarchy* of imperfect *Spirits*, a place at leaſt of

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an Archangel, I mean, that is not in the very loweſt Order of Souls: for let a Man travel never ſo far, and converſe never ſo much, he ſhall attempt in vain the attainment of that *Wit*, which by reaſon of the innate Imperfection of his Underſtanding, he is not capable of. If then a Father minds to ſend his Son abroad, in Order to improve his Underſtanding, let him conſult firſt with himſelf, and others, if he be capable of any conſiderable improvement; for the firſt and chief Source in us of *Wit* is the Soul it ſelf, which, all our indeavours ſhall not be able to quicken, if it be heavy and dull by Nature. For as ſome rough Stones may be ſmoothed into a bright Diamond, becauſe they contain already what ever is moſt valuable in a Diamond; ſo ſome others, for a contrary Reaſon, can never be changed into ſo Noble Subſtance. Even ſo, if our Souls be really capable of a further improvement, they may be ſo far improved,

as to attain to no ordinary Perfection; but we loſe our Time, if we pretend to equalize them at length to thoſe of a higher Order, and Superiour to them in Nature. For I take the ſupernatural Order, and the Natural to be proportionably anſwerable to one another. As then there is a certain finite number of Bleſſings, wherewith we may, if we pleaſe, work our Salvation, which being once granted, and infus'd, we can obtain no more; ſo likewiſe there is a certain pitch and meaſure of Natural Ability, beyond which, with all our poſſible endeavours, we can never reach. If then your Soul be of the Loweſt *Hierarchy*, you can no more pretend to the Excellency of a Higher one, than an *Angel* to be an *Archangel*, or an *Archangel* to be a *Power*, *&c.*

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SECT. III.

Different ſorts of *Wits*.

1. *The great variety of Phyſiognomy, and Humane Bodies not ſo wonderful as that of Humane Souls.*
2. *Of* Habitual, *and* Accidental *Wit.*
3. *Of* Univerſal *and* Singular *Wits.*
4. *That ſome Characters of Wit are inconſiſtent together.*
5. *Other unuſual diſtinctions of Wit.*

1. I Never wondred much at the great variety of Phyſiognomies and Humane Bodies, becauſe I am fully perſwaded that a perfect reſemblance in every particular, is either impoſſible, or can be at the moſt, but a work of meer chance, by a fortuitous Cohalition of the compounding corpuſcles into the ſame Texture. But believing no ſuch Compoſition or Tex-

ture in our Spiritual Souls, I ever look't upon them as more deſerving pieces of Wonder. I was always then extreamly ſurprized, and I am yet, that among ſo many Millions of Rational Souls, God hath created ſince the firſt Birth of the World; there are ſo few, if any at all, reſembling exactly one another: For tho' they fall not under the reach of our Eyes, yet we cannot but know infallibly their real diſcrepancies, by the diverſity we obſerve in their reſpective productions, which, as I was lately ſaying, ſpring originally from the Soul, though ſometimes it may ſuffer an occaſional ſtop, or chance, by the Temper of the Body. But to be more plain, what I ſay deſerved ever my higheſt admiration, was this, that let mens Bodies reſemble never ſo much one another, their Souls ſhall never be near of the ſame temper; by which I mean not only the ſame humour, but likewiſe the ſame degree of Perfection or *Wit*.

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Whereof for Methods ſake we may conſider two ſorts: The Firſt I call *Habitual*, the Second *Accidental*. An habitual Wit is proper only to all ſuch and only to ſuch as are habitually inclin'd, and diſpoſed to think and ſpeak ſenſefully, and to the Purpoſe on all occaſions. And this is the true Character of thoſe that are deſervedly called *Witty*. Such obſerve naturally St. *Bernard's* Judicious Precept, *Verbum bis Veniat ad Limam quam ſemel ad Linguam*, they think twice before they ſpeak once, leaſt their words ſhould forerun their thoughts. They are wiſe, diſcreet, humble, peaceable, and the fitteſt of all Men for the Managment of great Affairs. The accidental *Wit* is the Product in a manner of a meer chance, and hazard, ſuch as that of moſt, at leaſt of many Women, the moſt talkative, but neither the moſt judicious, nor the moſt thinking part of Mankind. They ſay ſometimes, things that look like *Wit*, but *impetu naturæ non judi-*

cii, meerly by a ſuddain vehemency of their Nature, or rather a certain volubility of their Tongues, not by Judgement, or a ſerious reflection, what proportion their diſcourſe may have with the Subject in queſtion, becauſe, they ſeldom take notice of the Dictates of their diſcerning Faculty, but follow the ſudden motions of a mutable and confuſed Imagination or Fancy. This is only to be underſtood of that ſort of Women, who are to be accounted Witleſs rather, than Witty: For this accidental Wit we are now ſpeaking of, holds ſo much of Chance, that meer Fools may now and then ſtumble upon it. And I am really of opinion, as, *Nemo omnibus horis ſapit*, No Man hath always his Wits about him, ſo likewiſe, *Nemo omnibus horis deſipit*, no mans Brains are ſo darkn'd, but that he may have on certain occaſions ſome *Lucid* Intervals. We muſt not then judge a Man Witty, as ſome ſhort ſighted People do, becauſe of his

his uttering a Witty word, or two; by chance rather than by judgement. 'Tis not one or two Converſations, nor broken pieces of Diſcourſe, that we are to take our meaſures by for deciſions of this nature; but after, at leaſt ſome days familiar converſe with thoſe, whoſe Reach and Capacity we are curious to know, we may become capable of making ſuch diſcoveries.

2. There is a ſecond diſtinction of *Wits* worthy our Conſideration. Some we may call *Univerſal Wits*, other *Singular* ones; which Word I take not in the moſt obvious Senſe, as it imports ſome peculiar pre-eminency, but as it may be determined to imply a limitation of Capacity to ſome particular Subject. For 'tis moſt certain that, *Non omnia poſſumus omnes*, as there are many things we cannot overcome with the ſtrength of our Bodies, ſo there are far more beyond the greateſt Abilities, and longeſt reach of our Souls. Thus a Man may

prove an able Mathematician, who ſhall be but an ordinary Divine, and on the contrary you ſhall meet with moſt ſubtle School Divines, that are ſimple and dull in all other reſpects. Thus likewiſe you may meet with ſome Phyſitians that can diſcourſe pertinently enough of all Tempers and Diſtempers, yea, and preſcribe in general twenty different Remedies for the ſame Diſeaſe, yet want a certain practical Judgement, ſo neceſſary for a due application, that they kill unhappily more than they cure. I have been familiarly acquainted with ſome excellent Gameſters at the Cheſs, which is thought to require a great deal of Wit, whom certainly I knew to be of little or no Underſtanding in all other things. Whereof we can give no rational account, unleſs we ſuppoſe, what I hold to be moſt true, that there are ſome Characters of Wit inconſiſtent one with another, becauſe they depend upon different principles; ſome ſpringing from the

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Intellect, and ſome from the Imagination, faculties ſo oppoſite one to another, that we can hardly ever excel in them both, becauſe the latter relies much upon meer proportion, combination, ſhape, and ſituation, and the former from all ſuch *Materialities*. Hence if a man is a moſt skilful Gameſter at the Cheſs, but cannot penetrate the ſubtile School Difficulties, 'tis an evident mark that his Imaginative faculty hath the advantage above the Intellective. And again, if an able Divine find himſelf unfit for the Mathematicks, Cheſs, or any other Mechanical exerciſe depending much upon the ſhape of things proportion, figure, and ſituation, he may certainly thence conclude, that Nature hath beſtowed upon him a penetrancy of underſtanding, but no conſiderable quickneſs of Imagination. As to thoſe Wits I have called *Univerſal*, I know not, if in the rigour of the Word it may be allowable,

that there are any such in the World. But taking the thing in a less rigorous sense, we may say, That such as have a general Wit fit for all Sciences, Arts, Employs, or at least can discourse ingeniously, and to the purpose, with a certain air of probability of any Subject whatsoever, are to be accounted *Universal Wits*. For this Character implies at least, besides a not ordinary quickness of Imagination, some general Notions and Ideas of most honourable things.

3. But here is a third distinction, or rather a third sort of *Wits*: For some are *slow*, and others *extemporary*. The latter are Men of a suddain and extemporary sharpness, and much esteemed by the lesser discerning sort, because having always an answer at hand to any Question whatsoever you may propose to them, they are never surprized. Such sort of Men discover all their abilities in the first converse you have with 'em; because

becauſe they are not capable to ſpeak to the purpoſe after premeditation; a witty Word muſt needs iſſue out of their Mouths on a ſuddain, as a Lightning out of a dark Cloud. The *Slower* Wits, as not being quick in their replies, are often laugh't at by the leſs underſtanding ſort. They conceive eaſily enough, but miſtruſting prudently their own Abilities, venture not to utter their Thoughts, till they underſtand the matter entirely, and to the bottom. You may compare them unfitly to the Water, that admits eaſily of any ſort of Figure, or Character you pleaſe to frame upon it with your Finger, but ſhall in a moment loſe it again. They reſemble Gold rather, or any other Metal hard to be wrought upon; but withall being tenacious, and a faithful Preſerver of whatever you Carve upon it. So they hardly ever let go the Images of things once conceived. They were undoubtedly meant by *Ariſtotle*, when

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he ſaid that the Melancholy are ingenuious and Wity, *Ingenioſi Melancholici*, which is not to be underſtood of a certain black and terreſtrial Melancholy, for this is dulneſs it ſelf, but of that ſort which is animated by brisk, lively and vigorous Spirits, and purified by a clear Flame.

4. I doubt it may not be allowed here to make a fourth diſtinction of *Profound*, and *Superficial* Wits: For ſome have received from above a kind of comprehenſive Knowledge of moſt things. They ſee in a manner as Angels do the remoteſt concluſions in their firſt principles, without any *formal* conſequence. Such Men are not only fit for Humane Society, but to ſit at the Helm, and manage the weightieſt Affairs of Great Kingdoms and Empires. They are not ſometimes much admired by the undiſcerning ſort, eſpecially in a free and familiar Converſe, becauſe they ſpeak little, being naturally more thinking and contriving, than talk-

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ative, but what they ſay carries along with it ſuch a Character of good Sence, that you ſhall inſtantly diſcern them to be none of the common ſort. Yet as there is nothing in the World *Omni ex parte beatum*, without a mixture of ſome imperfection; theſe Great Men are ſo taken up ſometimes with their own Thoughts, and Deſigns, that in a familiar converſe they ſeem not to talk to the purpoſe; which gives occaſion to the Vulgar, to think that they are really ſimple. Now theſe Wits we call *Superficial*, are not indeed wholly dull, but in the next degree to the dulleſt ſort. You ſhall not be ſenſible of their Weakneſs at their firſt Complement, their firſt utterance being commonly ſenſeful enough, Which I have likewiſe obſerved in ſome Fools. But you ſhall eaſily diſcern the heightneſs of their Brains in a continued diſcourſe; let them but go on, for ſpeak they muſt, and will ſhew in a trice their ſoppiſh and

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ſimple Temper, becauſe they pretend commonly to know every thing, though they have but few clear Notions of any thing. They value themſelves highly upon the account of a not ordinary Volubility of their Tongues, as being talkative beyond meaſure, like moſt Women, which the leſs knowing part of Mankind, take to be a piece of *Wit*.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

The Character of a Pretender to *Wit*.

1. *What is here meant by a* Pretender *to* Wit.
2. *Some reflections on the Chimists.*
3. *What is understood by* L'esprit deli'cats, *or a delicate* Wit.
4. *That this Character of* Wit *is not proper to the* French *alone.*

1. I Mean not by a *Pretender* to Wit a meer Fool, but rather one that hath some share in this Noble Endowment of the Mind. Far less do I understand any of those Learned Societies, that make a peculiar profession of promoting *real* Knowledge: For we must needs confess several of their Members not to be meer Pretenders to Learning; but eminent Virtuoso's

oso's, and great *Wits*. I mean then by this somewhat ambiguous Word, all such as foolishly pretend to more Wit than God and Nature have really allowed them. I conceive them to be near a kin to those superficial Wits, we were lately discoursing of, and not very unlike the *Nominal* Philosophers; because their deepest Knowledge reacheth no farther than to the Etimologies, Derivation, and Nature of Names; upon which account they prefer themselves before Men of more supposed Abilities. They are not clear enough sighted to discern what is true Sence, or down right Nonsense in a Discourse: They are only capable to judge of a polite Expression, of a Word *A-la-mode*, and other such like Childish niceties. They have, I confess, some confused Notions of every thing, which emboidens them to debate things that are beyond the reach of their Capacity. They are the professed Censurers of Mankind, and

and can ſpeak good of none, themſelves only excepted: I conceive them to be ever without Reſt and Repoſe, yea, and the moſt miſerable of all Men, becauſe moſt obnoxious, not to be envyed, but to envy others. They are highly offended if you happen to commend any other in their Preſence but themſelves, or any other Mans Works but their own; if perhaps they have appeared in Publick, wrap't up in a Pamphlet or two. For they make it their whole buſineſs to cut deep in the Reputation of thoſe who ſhould, methinks, be above the aſpiring, and reach of their Envy. *This Man, ſay they, in a familiar Converſe, hath printed ſuch a Book, as you know but containing little Truth in it, they could eaſily refute the Arguments, and Doctrine it offers, if they judged the matter worthy their while; he hath miſtaken himſelf in ſeveral material points, and ſpeaks here with little coherency, and there flat untruth,* though perhaps they have not ſo much

much as ſeen the Title Page of the Book they talk thus at random of; you ſhall name no Philoſophy, no Poem, no ingenious Piece, that ſuch men have not peruſed more than once, but you'll do them a piece of ſervice not to queſtion them too much upon any particulars, leaſt you diſcover their Vanity and Weakneſs. They are more guilty than the reſt of Mankind of that general hatred, that thoſe of one Profeſſion conceive eaſily one againſt another: For the common Word is but too true, *Figulus figulum odit.* They leave no Stone unmov'd to ruine the Repute of ſuch as concur, or ſhare with them in any profitable Employ. I know no People in the World that have leſs Reſpect for, and leſs Knowledge of Antiquity. I have heard ſome of thoſe Irregular Heads call *Ariſtotle*, whom probably they had never read, a meer Fool, only becauſe they had declared themſelves *Carteſians.* I have always obſerved

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his sort of Men to affect extream-
y novelties, but above all new terms
and new coin'd Words. *Italian*
Proverbs, Epigrams, *Devises*, pre-
meditated and short Sentences, and
sometimes the sharpest both *Hebrew*,
Greek, and *Latine* Words. 'Tis pleasant
to hear some Physitians, especially the
greener ones, talking perpetually of
Acids and *Alcaliis*. I dispute not
here the Truth of the thing in it self,
whether it may be allowed that an
Acid, as some do think, is the gene-
ral cause of all Distempers. But the
affections only in speaking of the mat-
ter, I justly blame, and look upon
it as a mark of little Judgement, and
Wit. Who would not laugh to hear a
Physitian resolve all his Patients
doubts with an *Acid* and an *Al-*
aly.

2. But nothing shall divert you
more, than the familiar use of some
conceited Chymists, especially if dis-
emblingly admiring them. They
will

will diſplay in a quarter of an hour ſeveral great and rare *Arcana's*, or Secrets, yet without diſcovering any of them, but only that being taken with the Bait, you may, buy at a high rate, what once known you ſhall undervalue or value but very little. There is no Diſtemper, but ſuch Phyſitians will undertake to cure. They ſpeak great things, and promiſe Wonders, as pretending to do more with a dozen of drops of ſome Eſſence, Oyle, Tincture or Spirit, than the *Galeniſts* with a Troop of *Simples*, and an infinite variety of loathſome Decoctions. They pretend to the great *Art* of making Gold, and of converting imperfect Metals into perfect. If you underſtand not their Myſteries, you muſt ſubmit your Judgement, becauſe you are not perhaps a Maſter of the Art, who only is able to comprehend the Frame, and Texture of the Philoſophers Stone, of the *Alkaheſt*, *extraverſion*, of *Mercury*, *&c.* I have a great reſpect for

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Helmont, that celebrated Chymiſt, but more upon the Authority of an Eminent Virtuoſo of this Nation who eſteems him, then by a free determination of my own Judgement. For I muſt beg his pardon, if I ſay, I conceive him to ſpeak ſometimes like a mad Man, or as if he underſtood not what he meant: Becauſe as all Men deſire naturally to know, *Omnis homo naturaliter ſcire deſiderat*: ſo all Men have a deſire no leſs natural and vehement to be known, *Omnis homo naturaliter ſciri deſiderat*; If then we have any important Secret to communicate to the World, the diſcovery whereof may redound to our Honour, and the good of Mankind, I am fully perſwaded that no man is ſo indifferent for the increaſe of his own Repute, as to publiſh it immediately, and obſcurely, or in ſuch terms, as few or none can comprehend. Thus when *Helmont*, and other ſelf-conceited Chymiſts ſpeak ſo boaſtingly and boiſterouſly of the great

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Wonders they can do, without discovering their Methods, so that they may be understood, I am apt to believe that they have but very confused *Idea's*, and obscure Notions of those great *Arcana's* they talk so much of.

3. You shall meet with some other Virtuoso's that pretend not to those high Strains of *Wit*, but to a certain politeness in their discourse, and Writings; if they meddle sometimes with the Pen. Their chief care is not how to speak sencefully, but how to speak politely, wherein they discover the weakness of their Judgement, and the shallowness of their *Wit*: For men of great Parts are wont to express themselves significantly, but without any apparent affection of too much *Polity*. This is the common defect of some young Gentlemen that live upon their Rents in, and about *London*. They think themselves sufficiently improved by frequenting the Play-House, and turning

ning over Play-Books, which contribute more to the tickling of their Imagination, than to the framing their Judgment. I confeſs, nevertheleſs, they may get ſome advantage by ſuch Lectures, provided they take not ſo much notice of the Words, and manner of expreſſion, as of the deſign and management of the intrigue, wherein the greateſt *Wit* of the piece conſiſts.

Others again make it a part of their buſineſs to ſtudy the faſhionable Art of Complementing: as being fully perſwaded, they can give no better proof of their Sufficiency, than by ſtudyed Complements, which is nothing elſe but a piece of *French Wit*: For 'tis almoſt become Proverbial among the Vulgar *French*, *c'eſt un homme d'eſprit il fait bien un Complement.* Such a one is a *Witty* Gentleman, becauſe he complementeth well. If the *French* had no other thing to be proud of but this Complemental mode, the greateſt Favour I could

do them, would be to reckon them among the Superficial *Wits*, I have ſpoken of elſewhere; and I fear all things impartially weighed, they can be hardly allowed any higher Rank. I know they pretend to a certain delicacy of *Wit*, which they monopolize to themſelves, as if other Nations could not reach it, and which they ſay is no otherwiſe accountable for, then that it is, as one of their *beaux eſprits* ſpeaketh, *un je ne ſcay quoy*, I know not what. But having lived near Twenty Years among the Learnedſt ſort of them, I think I may venture to give a clear and diſtinct notion of What they call delicacy of *Wit*, that thereby it may appear to be no prerogative of the *French*, but common enough to all civilized Nations.

4. I have obſerved then that what they call *un eſprit delicat*, is chiefly known by a ſmooth, eaſie and Natural expreſſion, an acurate and judicious compariſon, or a ſenſeful

Word

Word that may be eaſily miſtaken by a common underſtanding, or taken in a ſenſe it was not intended for. That this is a near deſcription of a *Delicate Wit*: I could eaſily if it were neceſſary, prove by thoſe very Authors, they allow moſt of this Character too. I can imagine no other reaſon why the *French* miſtake themſelves ſo far, as to think that other Nations have little or nothing of this forementioned *Delicacy*, then becauſe they write Romances, and Love Intrigues, which admit and require this ſmooth way of writing, more than any of their Neighbours, who generally choſing more ſolid Subjects, have not ſo often occaſion to give Proofs of their being capable to write *delicately*. For it would be eaſie to ſhow this Character in the Authors of all Nations, who have chanc'd to handle Subjects that required it.

I ſhall add in the laſt Inſtance, that thoſe whom we call here *Pre-*

tenders to *Wit*, are commonly better Spokes-men, than Writers or Penmen. They surprize those that have never before convers't with them, with an extempory Eloquence, and an easie Utterance of their Thoughts upon any obvious Subject, by an extraordinary Volubility of their Tongues, besides a vehement inclination to be hearkned to in a Publick Conversation, as if they were Oracles; hence it is that they think their repute lessened, if any other in the Company talk more, with greater Authority, or longer than themselves. But it often happens that those same Men, who seem to the the Vulgar sort, so eloquent in an extemporary debate, are at a loss in cold Bloud, and when on occasion, they must recollect themselves to write their own Thoughts. Whereof take this short and rational account: Such men being endow'd with a quick Imagination, which being stirred up in a Debate, furnisheth them with

Words

Words enough, and with certain extemporary Arguments, fitter to dazle the Vulgar sort, than to perswade a Solid Wit. On the other side, their Intellective Faculty being but weak, and now left to it self, without the help of an unwakened Fancy, gives no more Light.

SECT. V.

The Signs of Wit.

1. *That no Nation can Monoplioze Wit to its ſelf.*
2. *That cold Climats are fitter for the producing of great Wits, than hot Countries.*
3. *That the* Engliſh *loſe much of their Eſteem abroad, by writing ſo little in Latine.*
4. *The Chief Writers of* Great Britain.

1. I Take this for no certain ſign of Wit to be born under *Mercury*, rather than under *Jupiter*, *Venus* or *Mars*. A Child may prove a witty Man, though in the Critical Minute of his conception or birth, he be not countenanced by the favourable Aſpect, of any Planet, or Conſtellation; for I am of opinion, that the Influences of Heaven, the vul-

gar Heads talk so much of, do not so much affect our Bodies, as the inconspicuous *Effluviums* of the Earth, we scarce ever take notice of. Neither do I take it to be a certain mark of *Wit*, our being born in this Climate rather than in that, in a hot Country rather than in a cold, in the *Subpolar* Regions, rather than under the Equinoctial Line. I cannot but pity and laugh at the simplicity of the *Italians*, *French* and *Spaniards*, who think themselves wittier than the Northern Nations, only because they live in hotter Climats, for at this rate they must acknowledge the *Moors*, *Negroes* and *Indians* far beyond themselves in *Wit*, which they will not, I doubt, readily grant. It was in my Judgement no piece of *Wit* in the famous *Du Peron* to say of the Jesuite *Iretster*, *that he was ingenious for a German.* The occasion of this vulgar Error among Forreigners may be thus rationally accounted for. In the hotter Climats, because the

Bodies are weaker, the Inhabitants eſpecially, if civiliz'd, are more given to the exerciſing of the Mind, than of the Body. But the Northern Nations take generally more delight in the exerciſe of their Body, than in that of the Mind, as being more allured thereunto by their Natural Courage, good Temper, and not ordinary Strength. I ſee not then what other Influence the coldneſs of the Air can have upon us, than to incline us more to the Improvement of the Natural Endowments of our Bodies, than to the promoting thoſe of our Souls. But in the main here lies the miſtake of thoſe ſelf-conceited Forreigners, that ſeeing perhaps a greater number of *Virtuoſo's* among them, than among us, they conclude very illegally to our diſparagement, and to their own advantage, that they have more Wit than we, whereas they can be allowed to raiſe from hence, no other rational Inference, but perhaps this, that

that they have more *Wits*, or rather more Writers; for among twenty *French*, *Spaniſh* and *Italian*, that buſie the Preſs, you ſhall hardly meet with two, or three that deſerve to be ſtiled *Witty*. The Inhabitants then of the Northern parts of the World, delighting generally more in Wars, or in Warlike Exploits, than in Writing. No wonder if they trouble not the Preſs with ſuch a number of uſeleſs Books as the hotter Climats do: which argues a meer want of Inclination to buſie themſelves that way, but not in any innate diſpoſition to write well. For we cannot but know by daily Experience that no People in the World write more wittily than the the Natives of cold Climats, if once they betake themſelves to the *Muſes*, which minds me of a Saying of the famous *Barklay*, a moſt ingenuous Writer, who ſpeaks with a generous freedom, the known Ill and Good of all Nations, not ſparing the *Scots*, his own Coun-

try Men, wherein he thought them defective, or worthy of Reprehenſion. He hath then, diſcourſing of their Aptitude for all kind of *Literature*, theſe obſervable Words, *Litteræ nunquam felicius ſe habuerunt, quam cum in Scotos inciderunt.* I know not how to Engliſh this bold Expreſſion. But his meaning, if I miſtake it not, was, that the *Muſes* were never happier, than when after all their Travels, they had repaired unto the *Scots*; whereby he ſeems to inſinuate that it was not always the Fate of this Nation, no more than of moſt of the Northern Countries, for the reaſon above mentioned, to have lodged thoſe Honourable, Gentle, profitable Gueſts, but that when they happened to ſtay any conſiderable time among the *Scots*, they did them as much Honour, if not more than any other People in *Europe*. Whereof we may inſtance as ſufficient prooffs both *Barkleys*, Father and Son, the Famous

mous *Buchanan* the best of Poets since the Primitive Times, their undoubted Countryman, whatever others may pretend to the contrary. *Scotus* called deservedly in the Schools, *Doctor Subtilis*, the Subtile Doctor, together with the incomparable *Nepier*, first Inventor of the *Logarithmes*, and several others. I conceive those with the Generality of the Understanding sort, to be far beyond any Foreign Writers in the Subject, they handle, whether *French*, *Spanish*, or *Italian*, but what *Barkley* saith of the *Scots*, may likewise be said of the *Danes*, *Germans* and *Hollanders*. *Tycobrache* is a Star of the first Magnitude, *Kepler*, *Greiier*, *Clavius*, *Nostradamus*, are matchless. But I think without the offence of any other Nation, we may apply more particularly this Sentence to the *English*, *Literæ*, *nunquam se felicius habuerunt*, *quam cum in Anglos inciderunt*. For the World is obliged to them for the best and newest discoveries in

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Natural Philoſophy, *Phyſick* and *Anatomy*. But the pitty is they write ſo much in their own Tongue, that the leſs knowing ſort of Forraigners abroad, ask ſometimes if there be any Learned Men in *England*, becauſe, ſome Eminent Phiſitians excepted, few or none of them write in *Latine*, the Univerſal Language. There are ſeveral Excellent *Engliſh* Books that would prove a great increaſe of the publick good, and the Honour of this Nation, if they were tranſlated into *Latine* by an accurate Polite Pen. Of this number I reckon the Works of moſt Divines, and whatever the deſervedly renowned *Boyle* has hitherto publiſhed, the Whole Duty of Man, and the Diſcourſes of the Reverend Dr. *Tillotſon*, &c.

2. I ſhall ſay nothing of another incomparable advantage, that *England* has above moſt Nations of *Europe*. I mean that Learned and Royal Society, inſtituted for the promoting of *Real Knowledge*, and the general

general Good of Mankind. This is one of those Infinite Blessings this Nation received by his late Majesties happy Restauration, who was the Head and first of this Assembly, not only because of his Royal Prerogative and independency, but likewise upon the account of his Princely Wit and Wisdom, being not only in the opinion of all *Europe*, a most wise Prince, but in the Esteem of all such as have the Honour to approach his Sacred Person, a most compleat Gentleman. Likewise His Royal Brother, our present King, besides his Princely Virtues, which, as all the World knows, he possesseth in a most High Degree, is likewise deservedly esteemed in other particular respects. 'Twas observed at *Edinburgh*, that none gave a more rational account, than his Majesty of that wonderful Shower of *Herrings*, that happened at the *South* of *Scotland*. For whereas the most part had recourse to a certain *Pan-*

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ſpermia or univerſal ſeed of every thing, ſpread every where, which other neceſſary conditions concurring together, might be improved into a living Creature; his Majeſty ſolv'd more rationally this *Phænomenon* by certain Spouts of Water that happen ſometimes at Sea, wherein the ſmall *Herring* being eaſily, with the Help of a Whirlwind, toſſed up into the Air, and carryed off in a thick Cloud, fell down again not far from the Shoar. As to the other Members of this Royal Society, I think I do them no wrong, if I ſay that the famous *Boyle* is the Chief Pillar thereof; For his Name carries with it ſuch a weight of Authority in Forraign Countries, that I have heard ſome Eminent Men ſay, that whatever he poſitively affirms in his Books is ſure and evident. Out of all this diſcourſe, we may raiſe to our purpoſe this ſelf-evident Inference, that *Cælum atticum* is no more an infallible Cauſe or Sign of *Wit* than *Cælum Arti-*

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ticum, I mean that *Wit* is of all Nations, though not perhaps of all Ages, since some have bin extreamly dull, as the Tenth for Instance, and some likewise both fore and after Ages.

3. Yea I think it no Paradox to say that the cold Climats are the fittest Soils for the producing of great *Wits*. I conceive but two things necessary for the existency of what generally we understand by a great *Wit*, first, a Soul of the first, or at least none of the lowest *Hierarchy*, I mean one of a not ordinary perfection, whereof I have discours'd at large in the Second Section. Secondly. A well temper'd Body furnished, besides the necessary Organs, with a great quantity of brisk and lively Spirits. As to the former point, I hope you will grant that 'tis in the Power of the Almighty to create most perfect Souls in cold Climats as well as in hot. Hence then you can pretend no advantage. And for the latter 'tis evident, that

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that the Bodies in cold Climats are better tempered, of a firmer Texture, and fuller of brisk and lively Spirits, than those of hotter Countries, where men are commonly languishing, faint and exhausted by a sensible dissipation of those few Spirits they live and move by. They are then little acquainted with the World, who affirm the purest Air to be the only Element for the subtilest *Wits*; since we know by experience, and 'tis generally confessed by all Forraigners, that the *Scotch* and the *Irish*, who breath in no very thin Air, are far subtiler disputants in Divinity, Logick, and such like Scholastick, and Airy matters, than either the *Italians* or the *French*. I would then have Men to cease from gazing upon the Stars, and not look upon the Celestial Influences, as the only causes of those various Characters of *Wit*, we observe in the World; for there may be some more hidden Sources of acuteness, and less reflected

cted on: Such I take to be the inviſible *Effluviums* of the Earth: For as the Famous *Boyle* acutely proves, 'tis moſt probable that they are the unheaded Cauſes of many Epidemical Diſtempers, ſo I think it no leſs conformable to reaſon, to ſay that they occaſion likewiſe the good temper of the mind, by contributing not a little towards the Health of the Body; for ſince 'tis moſt certain by daily experience, that the Inhabitants of this Northern part of the World, to whatever [illegible] themſelves entirely, become at length moſt eminent therein, and do far exceed the reſt of Mankind, eſpceially in Learning, Courage, and all other Warlike Exploits, we muſt needs confeſs there may be Corpuſcles iſſuing out from the coldeſt Soil, that mixing themſelves thorow the Pores of the Body with the bloud, give it ſuch a Texture, as is requiſite to make it a fit Inſtrument for the moſt *Spiritual* Functions of the Souls. I

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am so far from beleiving the vulgar Error, or rather the vain conceit of some ancient *Romans*, that those who are born in, or near the cold *Zones*, have few or none of those natural Gifts that make a true *Virtuoso*; I am so far, I say, from beleiving such a gross and vulgar Error, that I hold such to be the fittest men in the World for penetrating Airy, and Subtile things, and for doing great ones, if they will be but at the pains, when occasion serves to improve their Natural Talents. For besides what I have said, are not we beholden to the Northern Nations for the Noblest and best pieces of Art and *Wit*, I mean those various and ingenious Engins, relating to shipping, lifting, weighing, *&c.* invented for the use and Conveniency of Mankind. The Gunpowder, the Guns, and most of the Mathematical Instruments, especially Microscops, Telescops, and Megalescops are the Fruits of their Industry. And either the *Germans* inven

invented the Art and Mystery of *Printing*, or the *Chineses*, who live not in a very hot Country. The *Japans* live almost as far from the Equinoctial Line as we do, and yet are accounted inferiour to no Nation in the World as to Wit, sharpness, and Penetrancy of Judgement.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

The Signs of Wit in the Features of the Body, or the Witty Physiognomy.

1. *That Physiognomy is neither a groundless or vain Science.*
2. *The whole Object of Physiognomy.*
3. *A rational account of Physiognomical conjectures, relating to the Head and its several parts, as Forehead, Face, Hinder Part, Hair, and its Colours, the Stature and its Accident.*
4. *In what sense the Tongue belongs to Physiognomy.*

1. I Know not well what was his Opinion of Physiognomy, who said that *Frons, oculi, vultus, persæpe mentiuntur, Oratio vero sæpissime.* The Forehead, the Eyes, the Face do often

do often impoſe upon us, but oftner yet the Tongue. Nevertheleſs I conceive clearly by this Expreſſion that he thought it not a vain and quite groundleſs Science, elſe he had not made uſe of this double Reſtriction, *perſæpe ſæpiſſime*. If then we fail ſometimes, when we judge of Mens inward Temper by their Phyſiognomy, or conſpicuous Features of their Bodies, we muſt acknowledge ingenuouſly our want of Skill, and inſight in the matter. *For ſince the Viſible things do manifeſt the Inviſible*, there are no doubt ſome viſible Characters of our Inſide, writen by the Hand of God in our outward ſhape. But as every one cannot read Books, and falreſs yet Men, thoſe Characters, how conſpicuous ſoever to ſome, and eaſie to decypher, ly hidden, and are untelligible miſteries to others. Yet as we ma diſcover *Foris*, his *Satellites*, or *Jupiters* Waiters thorow a good Proſpect or Teloſcop, tho' not with our naked Eye, ſo by the help

help of this curious Art, a vulgar understanding may, to his great satisfaction, see things, he could never before either observe or understand. Though I pretend not to any extraordinary Skill in this present Subject, yet I may be allowed to set down here some of my own observations, grounded upon Reason and Experience. Because Physiognomy can no more pretend to any demonstration, than Judiciary Astrology; what I shall say must be look't upon at the most, as probable conjectures, and not as certain and positive decisions, which you may follow as infallible Rules, to judge of those you converse, or consider. To proceed then with some order and Method, I conceive the whole Object of this curious Science to be comprehended in these four Words, *Frons*, *Oculi*, *Vultus*, *Oratio*. By the first as a Physiognomist, I understand not only the Forehead, but all the neighbouring parts backwards, as

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the Hair, the Ears, the Hinder part of the Head, or the Nape of the Neck. By the ſecond, *Oculi*, I mean what it literally ſounds, though we may allow a larger Signification to the Word *Vultus*, and underſtand thereby not only the whole Frame and Conformation of the Face, but alſo that of the whole Body. *Oratio* is not to be taken ſo much by the Phyſiognomiſt, for the diſcourſe it ſelf; as for the adjuncts thereof, as ſound *ſtammering*. *Precipitation*, *&c.* I ſhall then, without looſing the due reſpects I owe to the Author of the forementioned Sentence, invert it thus to my preſent deſign, in lieu of ſaying *Frons*, *Oculi*, *vultus*, *per ſæpe mentiuntur Oratio vero ſæpiſſime*, I do affirm and maintain that, *Frons Oculi vultus verum perſæpe loquuntur*, *Oratio vero ſæpiſſime.* The Front, the Eyes, the Face, ſpeak often the Truth, and diſcover really what we are, but the Tongue as yet more frequently.

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2. To begin with the Fore-part, and Higheſt of the Face or Forehead: We may conſider its Breadth, its Length, its *Prominency* or Height; I take the length thereof, from the diſtance between the two Temples, the Breadth from the Root of the Noſe upwards to the *Coronal* Suture. I ſay then a Forehead both broad, long, and ſomewhat *prominent*, or not quite flat, is a more than ordinary mark of a ſolid Judgement, and a ſharp *Wit*. Becauſe thoſe Dimenſions cannot be thus enlarged, but by a moſt perfect Soul, and able to extend thus the Matter it informs, or which is all alike for my intent, by a great number of Animal Spirits, who being brisk, active and lively, make room for themſelves. I ſaid *Prominent*, or not flat: For though flatneſs of the Forehead, provided other neceſſary conditions be not wanting, may be often conſiſtent with underſtanding and Capacity, yet it ſheweth ſome natural deficiency either in the

the Soul or in the Spirits, that could not thruſt forward their Work. But I know no greater diſadvantage, or more ominous of this part we are ſpeaking of, than its narrowneſs, or ſtraitneſs, whether we take the narrowneſs thereof from the Root of the Noſe upwards, or from the Right Temple to the Left; for this is but a too viſible mark of a very imperfect Soul, and of an extraordinary want of Spirits: And thoſe few that ſuch puny Heads do lodge, are withal Dormant in a manner, and cannot for want of Room either dilate themſelves, or give any Light. This you ſhall believe the more probable, if you take particular notice of thoſe that are naturally Fools, and ſilly. For you ſhall ſcarce meet with one of them that wants this mark of his Infirmity. What I have ſaid of the Forehead, may be likewiſe underſtood of the whole Head: The Bulk whereof, generally ſpeaking, if pro-

portionable to the Body is no ill mark, and I take the contrary to be a vulgar Error, confuted by daily Experience, and the aforesaid reasons. And if one contrary may discover another, I remember to have seen at *Amsterdam*, in the House near the Temple, wherein the natural Fools are kept, to the number of three or four, whose Heads did not surpass in Bulk an ordinary mans Fist. Now if Nature hath so proportionably enlarged a Mans Head, as if it had intended to make two of of one, by giving him a Forehead qualified in the aforesaid manner, and likewise a high and bulky hinder part, you shall hardly fail, if you say, that such a one is not of an ordinary *Wit* and Capacity. But that you mistake nothing here, I take the hinder part of the Head to be high or bulky, when it it is not cut in a manner even down, but over-reacheth the hollow of the Neck. For the *Perpendicular* descent of the Head, so that the

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hinder part and the Neck be upon the ſame *Perpendicular* Line, is called pleaſantly by the *French*, *Le coup de hach*, the Axe-ſtrock, and is generally thought a ſcarce ever failing ſign of a mean *Wit*: Becauſe I fancy the hinder part of the Head is the Magazine of the Soul, where the *Species* and Images of things are conſerved. This may be the reaſon why being deſirous to recover the memory of a forgotten thing, we turn naturally our hand back thither, as if we intended to awaken our *Memorative* Spirits. For I doubt not but the Memory is a great help, and Promoter too of Sharpneſs, Judgement and Knowledge, becauſe it repreſents faithfully to us all ſuch Circumſtances as are neceſſary for the right framing of our Reflections. If then Nature hath deprived us of this back Room, we may nevertheleſs have, perhaps, ſome no inconſiderable Talents, but none in a very high degree.

3. As for the Hair, four things may be conſidered concerning them. 1. Their lying flat on the Head. 2*ly*. Their curling. 3*ly*. Their quantity. 4*ly*. their Colour. The Firſt ſignifies Dulneſs, if they be not ſomewhat curled at the ends, becauſe this ſheweth a want of Heat. The Second ſome greater ſharpneſs, becauſe it ſuppoſeth ſome more heat. The Third, if very conſiderable, and accompanyed with thickneſs, is a ſign of too many Excrementitious Parts, and of a too material Subſtance of the Brains. Of the *Fourth* for Methods ſake, I ſhall diſtinguiſh but three ſorts, the black and the fair Colour, as two extreams, the Cheſnut Colour, as a middle between them both. The Fair is a ſurer mark of Wit, Judgement, and good Sence, than the Black, becauſe 'tis originally occaſioned by the movement of brisker, clearer, and more lively Spirits. Whereas the Black, I mean the deepeſt ſort, may ſometimes import a Melancholy, heavy

vy and dull Temper, as being of an exceeding Compact and close Texture, yet 'tis often produced by the motion of more active Spirits, but which are tempered with Terrestial ones. And when this happens 'tis no ill *Omen*: But the Cheasenut Colour is to be preferr'd before the other two, as proceeding not from the Action of meer Terrestrial, or of meer airy *Corpuscles* but from a just mixture of both.

4. I had almost forgot the Ears, whereof the Bulk only is considerable in relation to Physiognomy, because if they be respectively too great, or not proportionable to the Head, they are reckoned commonly to be a sign of dulness. The reason of the Vulgar is, because such People resemble *long Ear'd Asses*. But 'tis more rational to say, that this is occasioned by the weakness of an Imperfect Soul, who made one part proportionably larger than the other. Because though it aimed indeed,

as all things do by the impulse of Nature, at the most perfect, yet it could not reach it, as being none of the Highest, or of the first *Hierarchy* of Souls. But to turn about now from the Ears to the Eyes; they are not only windows through which the Soul looketh out to us, but through which likewise we look into it, and by their Light discover easily its real perfections, and abilities. I know but three things in them worthy a Physiognomist's Observation, their Bigness, their Situation, their Colour. The black eye represents to us a judicious Soul, but none of the sharpest, because of the too compact Nature of the Instruments it makes use of, I mean of the Spirits. The blew grayish is more common, and if some other Conditions be not wanting, may be a good proof of acuteness and solidity, because of a proportionable mixture of massie and airy Corpuscles, subservient to the Functions of the Mind. The largeness is an

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equivocal Sign, either of Dulneſs, or *Wit*, becauſe the great eyes are not commonly ſparkling like the Stars in the Firmament, but of a fixt Light, like that of moſt Planets. The little Eyes then, or of no exceſſive ſize, but quick, and conſtantly ſparkling, are reputed to be infallible marks of Sharpneſs and *Wit*, becauſe of the brightneſs, agility, and livelineſs of the Spirits they move and ſhine by. The Situation of the Eye makes but little to our purpoſe. Yet may not we be allowed to ſay that the deep eye ſheweth as much weakneſs in the Soul, as vigour in the Sight, or Viſion it ſelf; and on the other ſide, that the *prominent* Eye, which the *French* call *a fleur de peau*, may diſcover its good Temper and Strength. I explain my ſelf thus. Becauſe of the weakneſs of our *viſive* Faculty, we apply a Telleſcop or Proſpect cloſe to our Eye, whereas if it were ſtronger and more vigorous, we could ſee the Objects through the Proſpect re-

moved, and at ſome diſtance from our Eye. Conſider then the deep or hollow Eye, as a Proſpect joyning more cloſely in a manner to the Soul, and the *Prominent* ſomewhat more diſtant; and you ſhall inſtantly underſtand why I take the *Prominency* of the Eye for a mark of greater vigour in the Soul, as likewiſe wherefore I affirm the contrary of a deep Eye; which ſupplyeth, in ſome manner, this imperfection of the Soul; becauſe gathering cloſely together the viſual Beams, it repreſents to us the Objects at a greater diſtance, but not ſo well thoſe, or not at all, that ly at our ſides, unleſs we turn about to them. I know this compariſon is lame in ſome reſpects, but *Omnis comparatio claudicat*, you know elſe it would change its Nature.

5. As for the other part of the object of Phyſiognomy, which the *Latines* call *Vultus*, *Viſage* or Face, and whereby here I underſtand not only the conformation of the Face, but

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of the whole Body; I ſhall only ſay if we take it by the firſt Byaſs, we ſhall find nothing obſervable in it but the Colour and the Shape. The Face ſomewhat inclining to a natural and habitual pale, does in our Clymate promiſe moſt; becauſe the Spirits ſeem to be always refining within by ſerious thoughts, attentive ſpeculations, or ingenious contrivances. The fair Complection likewiſe, becauſe of the clearneſs of their Spirits, ſhews a well diſpoſed Scul, but not always very much acuteneſs. As to the ſhape, more length than breadth is to be moſt commended; for ſuch commonly have the hinder part of the Head very large, which, as we ſaid lately, is a good mark.

Now if we take the word *vultus* preciſely for mans out-ſide, or outward appearance, we may conſider two things, his Stature, and the accidents thereof. As to the firſt, the talleſt men generally ſpeaking, are not always the *Wittieſt*: becauſe in

ſuch, as in High Houſes, the uppermoſt Room is commonly the worſt furniſhed, their Spirits being too much diſperſed to produce any conſiderable Effect. The middle ſize, for the functions of the Mind, as well as for thoſe of the Body, is the moſt advantagious. I ſhall ſay nothing of the adjuncts of the Body, ſave that 'tis obſervable that the crooked, lame and blind, are ordinarily poſſeſſed of not ordinary endowments of the mind, whereof I can give no other rational account, than by ſaying that this happens through a peculiar diſpoſition of an univerſal providence ſupplying thus abundantly the defects of the Body, by imparting to the Nobler part, the Soul, a peculiar perfection, and Beauty. Out of all this we may conclude not without a a ſhow of probability, that, *Frons, oculi, vultus, verum perſæpe loquuntur, Oratio vero ſæpiſſime:* The Front, the Eyes, the Face ſpeak often Truth, and diſcover what really we are, but our Tongue yet

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more frequently layeth us open to the underſtanding ſort, and perchance more certainly too, eſpecially if we take it for the very ſubſtance of the things we ſay, for then by the coherency, or incoherency of our diſcourſe, we betray our ſelves either to be Fools or wiſe, dull or *Witty*. But as a Phyſiognomiſt preciſely, I mean here the out-ſide only, if I may ſo ſpeak, and the accidents of our Speech, as the *Sound*, *Precipitation*, *Stammering*, *Duration*, *&c.* As to the Sound: To ſpeak High and boiſterouſly without any rational occaſion, is a ſurer mark of a ſharp voice than of a ſharp *Wit*. *Precipitation* proceeds ſometimes, I confeſs from a too quick apprehenſion, that conceives more things than the Tongue can well utter in a ſhort time; but more often 'tis occaſion'd by the confuſed *Idea's* of the Soul. By the duration of our diſcourſe, I mean that exceſſive one, whereby we become inſufferable to thoſe we converſe,

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as being talkative beyond measure, which I take to be no sign either of *Wit* or judgement, unless we admit that the talkative sort are the wittiest, and most judicious, which no man of Sence will ever grant, as being sufficiently confuted by obvious reason, and daily experience: For as, *Loquaciores avium quæ minores*, the smallest Birds, for Instance, the Sparrows, Nightingales, *&c.* make more noise than the greater ones do; as the Eagle, the Swan, *&c.* So those *petits esprits*, shallow *Wits*, and superficial Understandings are commonly more talkative than the Judicious, and most thinking sort of Mankind.

SECT

SECT. VII.

The Imperfection of humane *Wit* and Knowledge.

1. *That Science does rather make us humble than proud.*
2. *That our cleareſt Knowledge of Natural things is but meer Sceptiſiſme, and the Learnedſt Men, but meer Scepticks.*
3. *That we have a ſelf-evidence of ſome truths, but no true demonſtration of moſt things we undoubtedly believe.*
4. *That meer matter may do by God's Omnipotency what our ſoul ſuppoſed Spiritual, performs.*
5. *That not only the Myſteries of our Religion, but the moſt Obvious and known Objects are above the reach of our limited Capacities.*

1. 'Tis a common ſaying, *Scientia Inflat*; but I doubt if it be not

not likewiſe a vulgar Error: For I am ſo far from believing that true Knowledge does puff up a Man, and ſwell him with Pride, that I can conceive nothing fitter to make us truly humble without either Hypocriſie or Diſſimulation. 'Tis eaſie to conjecture upon what grounds I run thus contrary to the Stream, and the general Opinion of moſt men, becauſe methinks 'tis evident that the chief Source of true Humility, & Humiliation too, is a perfect knowledge of our own Weakneſs and Imperfections, of our Incapacity, and little Inſight in moſt things, which I take to be proper to thoſe only, who are the moſt knowing ſort of Mankind. I look upon ſuch as true Scepticks in this Senſe, That whatever is not laid open to their Eyes, either by the Light of an undeniable demonſtration, or by ſome ſort of ſelf-evidence, they juſtly doubt of. Becauſe they underſtand perfectly the difficulties on both ſides, which holding their Judgement

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in *æquilibrio*, equally in the middle, and in ſuſpence, hinder them from joyning cloſely with either of the extreams. Hence it appears that as the greateſt Wits have moſt Doubts, ſo the Dulliſh are commonly thoſe that doubt almoſt of nothing. I ſpeak not here in matters of Faith, for as Chriſtians, we are meer Believers, not Phyloſophers, but of Nature and Natural things, of the World, and what it contains, or whatever is within us, or without us: whereof we have ſo little Knowledge, that the ſelf-evident principles excepted, we know nothing evidently, or at leaſt by demonſtration. We know indeed certainly that we are, as having ſome ſenſible Foundation both in Eſſence and Exiſtency, That there is in us a certain internal principle, whereby we move, ſubſiſt, and underſtand, which we call the Soul. But how it performs all theſe things, what it is, whether Spiritual or Corporal we know not: I believe my

Soul

Soul to be both Immortal and Spiritual. And I have read ſeveral Treatiſes pretending to a clear demonſtration of its Spiritual Nature, which I cou'd never yet ſee, nor any Impartial judge, I am afraid, ſhall ever be ſenſible of, becauſe we can have no certitude from the light of Reaſon that ſhe hath either being, or operation, not depending upon matter, or ſome Material *Phantaſma*; and what in the other Life ſhall be her way of acting, we ſhall not know ſo long as we remain in this. I am not altogether unacquainted with the chief Prerogatives of our Souls, which are to conceeive, and frame general Notions, to preſcind, or rather divide by her ſharp Edge the matter, into various parts ſeverally intellegible, to raiſe Influences from the general to the particular, and from the particular, though more Illegally to the general, to remember things paſt, enviſage the preſent, and frame not unlikely conjectures of

what

what is to come. But all this amounting to no more than to ſome degrees of probability, offers nothing like a demonſtration of the Spirituality of our Souls. For I conceive no reaſon why God, who made all things of nothing, may not likewiſe make what he pleaſeth of ſomething. Where is there then any contradiction, if we ſay that God, who created the Matter of nothing, may change the ſame into a being capable to do, and in a more perfect manner to whatever our Soul performs. For I conceive it to be but a meer prejudice, and not reaſon that leads us to ſay, that whatever thinks, or *reaſons*, is of a Spiritual Nature. 'Tis obſervable then, whenſoever we pretend to reveal by demonſtration ſuch hidden Myſteries, we always ſuppoſe what in firſt Inſtance we ſhould prove, I mean that God is neither ſo powerful to elevate the *matter* to what he pleaſeth, nor ſo skilful as to change it into a form capable

of

of moſt perfect operations, or at leaſt of thoſe that we allow to our Souls, ſuppoſed to be Spiritual. But if we underſtand not the nature of our Souls, we can conceive almoſt as little of the Fabrick of our Bodies Here we are Admirers, and not Philoſophers, ſince we can give but a very imperfect, and a ſcarce rational account of what we behold in our ſelves, and know not neither how we live, how we grow, how we move, nor from what part of the Body the Bloud begins to circulate, or in what part of the eye the viſion is made, or whether the Child breath's in the Womb or not, &c. In one word, the whole Texture of our Body is ſuch a piece of wonder to the underſtanding ſort, that it ſeems to ſome to be no leſs beyond the reach of our capacity, than the very Nature of a meer Spirit.

2. I do firmly believe what all true Chriſtians believe; but this fun-

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damental article of all Religon, that there is a God, though I were no Christian, I could prove to my self, and perhaps to others too, by a convincing demonstration: Yet such is the weakness, or rather the darkness of Humane Understanding, that the clearest demonstrations of this important Truth are refuted by some one or other, whose obstinacy they cannot conquer. And *Vasques*, if I misremember not, a subtile *Romish* Divine, after a large confutation of whatever had been said before his time, in order to prove the Existency of a Soveraign being, admits at length but a meer moral demonstration of this Fundamental point, though so evident indeed, that it cuts away all pretence, and excuses to infidelity. As to the other mysteries, for Instance the *Trinity*, and Gods contingent degrees, which our reason reacheth not; 'tis a piece of madness and folly for us to endeavour their discovery by the

light

light of reaſon. Yet they may be inculcated to the People, though infinitely above their comprehenſive faculty, as being Articles of meer Belief, and not at all within the reach of humane Underſtanding. I could not but ſmile to hear a certain Miniſter once preach on this Subject, becauſe he very confidently aſſured his Auditory, that he would prove the exiſtence of the *Trinity* with no leſs evidence than the ſubtileſt Philoſopher could demonſtrate the being of God in Nature, and his Unity. How far he performed this, 'tis neither worth your while to hear, nor mine to relate. I ſhall only ſay, that he ſhewed himſelf all along a very ill Philoſopher, and a worſe Divine.

3. But what wonder if men are ſo ſhort ſighted in things ſo far above the reach of their Capacity, ſince they know not the Nature and Natural properties of the moſt familiar and obvious Objects. I do in vain make my Application either to the Old

Old or New Philoſophy for the intelligence of the moſt common things. I am for Inſtance as little ſatisfied, when I am told, that whatever I ſee under ſo many different figures, ſhapes and ſizes, is only occaſioned by a various Texture and coalition of Corpuſcles, I am, I ſay, as little ſatisfied with this, as with *Ariſtotle's* matter and form united together, I know not how: For to ſay a thing belongs to this or that *Species* or kind, becauſe it hath a certain texture that we can give no further account of, is a Notion almoſt as obſcure unto my dim Underſtanding, as if you had inſtanced for Anſwer, *A matter informed by a certain ſpecifical form.* On each ſide you ſee by the very word *certain* we inſinuate enough our doubtfulneſs and uncertainty of the thing. What more known than the Hiſtory of the ebbing and flowing of the Sea: The dulleſt Mariner can give you a ſatisfactory relation thereof; but you

may

may expect in vain a rational account of the ſame from the ableſt Phyloſopher. To attribute with the greateſt number of Philoſophers this wonderful Phænomenon to the Stars, or more particularly to the Moon, is but an ingenuous confeſſion of their ignorance, and deſpair of a better anſwer. For it being certain that when the Moon is in the upper *Quadrant* of our *Meridian*, the Waters are not only ſwelled here, but likewiſe in the oppoſite part of the Earth towards our *Antipodes*; I cannot conceive how the Moon pierceth through ſuch a thick and maſſie Body as the Earth, ſo as to heighten the Waters beneath. I'm ſure ſhe acts not at ſuch a diſtance, either by heat or by light, for her heat is not ſtrong, and her light is but very weak, and neither of them can penetrate above ten foot within the ſuperficies of the Earth Her occult and ſecret Influences, I neither underſtand, nor look upon as an anſwer capable to ſatisfie

a curious enquirer. The movement of the Earth, by which ſome endeavour to give an account of this regular movement, we obſerve in the Seas, beſides the uncertainty of this principle contributes but little or nothing towards the ſolution of this inſuperable difficulty; and *Maurus*, his Angel moving thus orderly this great and vaſt Body, is but a gueſs, and at moſt but an ill grounded Opinion.

4. If we come now aſhoar, and travel over the habitable Tracts of the Continent, what an infinite number of obvious, but moſt hidden Myſteries ſhall we diſcover every where. I ſhall offer but two at preſent to your conſideration, the Loadſtone, and Quickſilver, or *Mercury*. The former is an unpoliſh'd piece of Work, and looks like an excrementitious part of Nature: But Who can give us a tolerable account of its attractive faculty, why it draws, and holds cloſely Iron, rather than any other Metal; why it thruſts from it

the

the Needle with one Pole, and attracts it again with the other; and why it declines more or leſs, or not at all in ſeveral parts of the World, *&c.* Philoſophers are commendable for doing their utmoſt endeavours, and ſqueezing their brains to anſwer ſuch difficulties; but I fear after all their Sweats, and laborious Speculations, they ſhall never ſatisfie either themſelves on this ſubject, or others. *Mercury* is clearer indeed to the Eye than the Loadſtone, but as obſcure if not more, to our darkned Underſtanding. 'Tis the very riddle of Nature, *Ænigma naturæ*, 'tis a Monſter compounded of meer contrarieties, as being round and ſharp, cold, and in the opinion of ſome hot too, light and heavy, moiſt and dry, corruptible and incorruptible, always the ſame, and yet moſt changeable, inviſible, and by an eaſie recovery of it ſelf viſible again: I ever admired above all this, its compactneſs and cloſe texture; for it admits not the

ſub-

Subtileſt Air, and giving no acceſs to the points of Fire, it flyeth from before it.

5. But I need not have recourſe to the confeſt Prodigies of Nature, to ſhow how far we are from underſtanding any thing to the bottom. The very Sciences themſelves are not ſuch to us, if narrowly look't into. I have reaſon to examine the Truth of *Euclides* demonſtrations, ſince I ſee the Impoſſibility of a common *Segment*, as they ſpeak, demonſtrated to my Weak Judgement by *Proclus*, and again contradicted with no leſs evidence by other able Mathematicians. To ſay nothing of the duplication of the *Cub*, the Squaring of the Circle, and other *Gordian* knots of this Nature; I doubted always of the very Foundation of Geometry, I mean of the true Notion of a point. For when I hear this ſtrange deſcription, *Punctum eſt cujus pars nulla eſt*, I begin to wonder what that can be, that though not a Spirit, has no

Imaginable parts: and then concluding there's no such thing in being. I take the true Object of Geometry as a Line that is made of Points, and a Superficies compounded of Lines, to have no other Foundation in Essence or Existeney, but my own Conceit and Fancy. I am moreover so little satisfied with the groundless grounds, and Principles of judiciary Astrology, that I fancy it the most vain, and most uncertain of all Sciences, and those that admire it to be none of the judicious sort. I confess, the Heavens are great Volumes, wherein we may read the wonderful effects of Gods infinite Power and Wisdom; but you shall see no Characters there that express the Contingency of things to come, and the occasional determinations of our free Wills. For what connexion can any rational man imagine between the Aspects of the Stars, and a Childs being one day either a King or an Emperour, or to dye such a

death.

death. We know neither the Nature, Properties, nor Influences of the Celeſtial Bodies; how can then a man, not a meer Fool, preſume to determine their contingent Effects. Aſtronomy indeed is ſomewhat better grounded. But how many things are we yet here ignorant of, the quantity of the natural year ſhall never be exactly determined, becauſe we can never know the critical Minute of the Suns firſt ſtep backward from one Tropick towards the other. The new Kalender is not as yet perfect, and may one day ſtand in need to be corrected a ſecond time: We can give but a very uncertain account of the Nature of Comets, and debate often about their hight, periods, movement and bulk; whether the light of the fixed Stars be innate, or only borrowed from the Sun, we are not as yet certain. We do but gueſs at their real diſtance from us and among themſelves. We ſpeak raſhly, and perhaps, upon not very

good grounds, of their wonderful Rapidity and Swiftneſs. I ſhall ſay nothing of an infinite number of other things, that we can give no rational account of, as for Inſtance, of Antipathy, Sympathy, Poiſons, and of that ſort of Remedies, we call Specificks. If I chance to meet with two men I never ſaw before, I find my ſelf more inclin'd to ſerve the one than the other, but why, I am to ſeek. As ſoon as the Lamb cometh into the World, it flyeth from before the Woolf, as from a known Enemy: Now by what kind of Impulſe or Impreſſion, it behaves it ſelf ſo rationally, I ſhall willingly learn from any of the Modern, or Antient Philoſophers. The ſtrange effects of Poyſons are but too well known, whereof ſome are quick, ſome are ſlow, ſome cold, and others hot. But they all agree in this, that they deſtroy at length the ſtructure of our Bodies. I remember to have been preſent at the overture

of a Lady, that had certainly been poyſon'd, which nevertheleſs we could not affirm by any viſible Impreſſions made upon her inward Parts, the alteration made by this ſubtile Poyſon being quite inſenſible. I am of opinion that in this Life we ſhall never reach to a perfect knowledge of ſuch odd pieces of Wonder. Let us then acknowledge that there is no true Philoſophy in the World but Sceptiſiſm; not that I take Scepticks here for men that doubt of every thing, yea, and of their own Exiſtency too, for 'tis, perhaps, a vulgar Error to believe that there were ever any ſuch in the World, and withall not meer Fools: I mean then by Scepticks thoſe that are come to ſuch a pitch of Knowledge, as to doubt rationally of every diſputable matter, becauſe ſeeing nothing under one light only, and looking narrowly into the reaſons of both ſides, they diſcover but ſome few, or

more degrees of probability without the very Twilight of Evidence.

SECT. VIII.

The Character of a great Wit.

1. *That there are few great* Wits.
2. *Who are not to be reckoned among the great* Wits.
3. *The truest notion of a great* Wit.
4. *That great* Wits *are Wary in their decisions, and not at all Dogmatical.*
5. *The difference between* Aristotle *and* Descartes.
6. Thomas Aquinas *upon what account to be most esteemed.*

1. I Doubt, if I may not say of great *Wits*, what *Cicero* says somewhere of great Orators, that scarce one was seen in an Age: For as *Aristotle* calls

calls little men comely, but not beautiful, ſo likewiſe I take the moſt part of thoſe that the World admires moſt, to be but jolly Wits, *des eſprits jolly*, as not throughly deſerving, becauſe of ſome conſiderable deficiency, a more honourable Title, or rather not filling in all ſenſe what is in rigour meant by a *great Wit*: For I conceive none to be ſuch, who has received but one Talent, though in a juſt meaſure: Thus a man may be an excellent Poet, a skilful Aſtronomer, a good Geomatrician, a ſubtile Logician, and yet unfit for all other Sciences; ſuch an one then can be reckoned but among the jolly *Wits*, and that is Honour enough for him. I do far leſs judge thoſe to be great Wits, who underſtand nothing, but what is beyond common Senſe and Underſtanding, as theſe Metaphyſical Whymſies, abſtracted *Idea's*, and Airy Notions, that fill the empty heads of ſome ſpeculative Virtuoſo's. Neither

ther could I ever have a great Opinion of ſuch, as preferring themſelves before the reſt of the World, condemn whatever flows not from their own Pen, or whatever is beyond the reach of their ſhort Capacity. For this is no more than what the duller ſort are equally capable of. I am likewiſe ſomewhat out of conceit with moſt of our Modern Philoſophers, who will have none to be really *Witty* and Ingenious, but ſuch as underſtand perfectly Mechaniſm, or the Texture and Structure of things, or how to knit, weave and knead one Corpuſcle with another. For at this rate Apothecaries, Smiths and Bakers, and the reſt of the Mechanical Tribe, are to be accounted true Philoſophers. Yet I ever conceived Philoſophy to be ſomething beyond the reach of this common ſort, and would be very loath to become either a Smith or a Baker, in order to gain the Honourable Name of a true Philoſopher.

I have a great reſpect, and I am forced to it by the very name, for what we call in *England* Divines, yet I look not upon them as great *Wits*, becauſe if they be good Chriſtians, they muſt renounce the uſe of their *Wit*, and believe the moſt inconceivable Myſteries of Religion upon no better ground, than the Simpleſt ſort, that is upon the ſureſt of all, the Authority of a Divine, tho' obſcure Revelation. I conceive them to be ſhort, no other Notion of a great *Wit*, than what Sceptiſiſm affords me: Not that I mean a man that doubts of every thing, but rather one that can ſhow demonſtratively the meertitude of all diſputable matters, thoſe of Faith, with which we meddle not, laid aſide. The doubts of ſuch men are not meer Negative ones, for thoſe are groundleſs, but rational, poſitive, and grounded upon ſuch reaſons as may demonſtrate our little Capacity, and Inſight into moſt diſputa-

ble things. So as the greateſt *Wit* of Angels, conſiſts in knowing; the greateſt *Wit* in Men conſiſts in doubting: whoever than after a due conſideration of any difficulty in what Subject ſoever ſeeth the *Pro* and the *Con*, or whatever may be ſaid for maintaining either part of the contradiction ſo clearly, that he is forced to ballance his underſtanding in the middle by an almoſt equal Weight of counterpoizing Reaſons: This Man I ſay, and no other may aſſume to himſelf without Uſurpation, the Name of a great *Wit*: You ſhall eaſily know him either by his diſcourſe, or by his Writings. He is not of the Humour of certain Dogmatical Heads, who becauſe they ſee things but under one light, undertake boldly to determine the greateſt difficulties at the very firſt, hearing of them. But the Man we are ſpeaking of being wary and cautious, requires time to conſult with himſelf about the matter, before he ventures

to give a positive answer, which sometimes occasions the less understanding sort to take him to be none of the sharpest; and when he is come to a resolution upon the case proposed, his Decisions are so moderate, so prudent, and so far from being too daring and bold, that they scarce ever amount to more than to the determination of some degrees of probability, if the thing be really doubtful. I have always admir'd this Character in the Honourable *Robert Boyle*: 'Tis to be met with every where in his Writings, and is observable likewise in his discourse, if he be required an answer to any considerable difficulty. Yet if it chance that some Eminent *Virtuosi* express themselves sometimes in doubtful matters, as if they judged them evident, this is not to be wondred at, because as some Men cannot express well their Thoughts, others have such an easie utterance, that through the Heat of dispute, or quickness of Ima-

magination, they do often make uſe of Words ſignifying more, than really they intend. But generally ſpeaking when you hear a man ſay, he can give an evident account for inſtance of the ebbing and flowing of the Sea, of the fits of the Ague, of the attractive faculty in the Load-ſtone, of the nature of Poiſons, and Specificks whether exteriour or interiour, of the Origine of the Winds, of the ſolution of Gold by *Aqua Regia*, and not by *Aqua fortis*, of the ſolution of Silver by *Aqua fortis*, and not by *Aqua Regia*, and a thouſand other abſtruſe difficulties of that nature; you may be ſure that his inſufficiency is nothing inferiour to his vanity and preſumption. I fall much ſhort upon this account of the great Eſteem ſome have for *Diſcartes*, becauſe he pretends too much to evident Truths, and will have us before we are fit for his Philoſophy, to make our Underſtanding *Tabulam raſam*, as a ſmooth board, capable of

any

any Character by ſcraping out of it the Pictures of all things it was fraught with from our greener years, as if none had ever ſpoken Truth but himſelf, or as if our intellective faculty being thus naked, was not equally diſpoſed to be wrought upon by error, as well as by Truth. Some of his Followers betray themſelves to be but half witted, when they deny a thing, becauſe *Ariſtotle*, whom they are not acquainted with, affirmed it, and pretended it to be an evident Truth, becauſe forſooth *Diſcartes* held it.

2. To do both theſe Philoſophers right, though with the learnedſt part of the World, I apprehend *Ariſtotle* to be far beyond *Diſcartes*, as to ſharpneſs, depth, and penetrancy of *Wit*: They have ſpoken both many things to the purpoſe, and probable enough, and many others likewiſe with a greater appearance of falſehood than Truth. The main difference I find between them both only conſiſts

ſists in this, that *Ariſtotle* undertook to debate and diſcuſs matters beyond the reach of Humane Capacity. Such I reckon to be the *Infinite*, whether in number, or matter, the *Diviſibility* and Compoſition both of the *fluent* and *permanent continuum*. *Diſcartes* ſpeaketh of Matter and Motion, and things indeed leſs ſubtile, but more intelligible; yet I conceive his concluſions drawn from thence to be no demonſtrations; and if any of his Diſciples look upon them as ſuch, I fear he is either prejudic'd, or ſees things but under one light: I have ſo good opinion of *Diſcartes* his Judgement, that I believe he intended not to give us a true demonſtration of God in his *Metaphiſical Meditations*, though grounded, if I miſremember not, upon theſe two principles, firſt, that whatever we have, a clear and diſtinct *Idea* of, exiſts, or may exiſt. Secondly, that we have a clear and diſtinct *Idea* that God is in Nature. For I know not why I may not have a

clear

clear and distinct *Idea* of any impossible thing, since our Knowledge receiveth not so much its qualifications from its Object, as from the manner of its tendency towards the Object, which may be clear, tho' the Object be confused. Again, no man of good sense will take this proposition, *Deus est*, *God exists*, for one of those we call *Notas per se*, known immediately by their own self-evidence, without a *Medium* or reason to prove them. Nevertheless this must happen in our case, if we have a clear and distinct *Idea* of Gods being really existent in nature, or of his being possible: For if I conceive an infinite good possible, 'tis consequential that he really exists, since in this very notion the actual existency is included, as being a most material perfection.

3. Let us not then impose upon our selves, and take for demonstration by a certain Precipitation of judgement, what at the utmost beareth

reth but a fair ſhow of probability. I may methinks be allowable to miſtruſt a Mans Capacity, when he pretends to know all things to the bottom, or to ſay nothing, what is not either in it ſelf, or by conſequenee clear and evident. I have always been a great admirer of *Thomas Aquinas*, the Angelical Doctor, and do look upon him as a tranſcending *Wit*, but meerly upon this account, that he ſeems to be certain of nothing, though *in Corpore articuli*, he ſtands at length ſtiffly to one part of the contradiction, and anſwers the Arguments for the other. But you may eaſily gather both from the difficulties he propoſeth to himſelf, and his anſwers that he pretended no more than to doubt rationally of diſputable matters; and more than this cannot be expected from the capacity of Man, who has no comprehenſive knowledge of natural things, as Angels have. I take then an ingenuous Ignorant to be of the moſt ingenious

or knowing ſort: I mean one that profeſſeth ſincerely he knoweth nothing certainly, but who withal, becauſe of his penetrancy, and great *Wit*, can give a rational, though not a demonſtrative account of every thing. Such an one I conceive capable to defend probably, and no further, whatever you may propoſe to him. For few things are to a man of this Character ſelf-evident. He doubts not only of the poſſibility of ever doubling the *Cub*, or ſquaring the *Circle*, of fixing of *Mercury*, of making malleable Glaſs, *&c.* But he diſcovers without Teleſcops, Stains, and Spots in the very Stars themſelves, I mean Obſcurity, Falſehood, uncertainty in the cleareſt and moſt approved Notions, Errors, Miſtakes, and ſometimes flat Deviations from the Truth in the moſt accurate Authors. He neither admires the old Philoſophy, nor dotes upon the New, but takes up the Cudgels indifferently for either, as it ſerves his

turn,

turn, or his fancy. He is not always satisfied with what we call Mathematical Demonstrations, and discovers them often to be but false apparitions, imposing easily upon a weak understanding. He scrupleth at the vulgar Opinions, and values them no more than vulgar Errors. This is the Sentiment of an honourable Gentleman, whom I respect as a great *Wit*; I have heard him say more than once, that he found by experience the most vulgar Opinions to be flat untruths, which he has ingeniously proved to conviction in several of his most learned Books. Nevertheless, though such Men seem to be satisfied with nothing, not through Pride, for they are of the Humblest sort, but through Knowledge, yet they are desirous to learn from the meanest Capacities, as well knowing that their Understanding, how vast soever, is but of a limited extent, and not *Omniscient*. Tho' they be sparing of their *Elogiums*, as admiring

ring nothing, yet they are ſeldom guilty of detraction, of too much blaming, or raſhly condemning other mens labours; and if Books receive their Fates from the Capacity of the Readers, 'tis a good Fortune for a well penn'd Piece to fall into ſuch mens hands: for being great Artiſts themſelves, they are the beſt Judges of Arts, and do praiſe moderately what they judge to deſerve it, or ſay nothing at all of what they either cannot, or will not commend.

SECT.

SECT. IX.

The Origine and Progress of *Wit.*

1. *The extent of* Adam's *Wit.*
2. *The natural endowments of his mind, not destroyed by his Sins.*
3. *That we owe to the* Ægyptians, Arabians, Grecians, Romans, *the greatest part of Humane Sciences.*
4. *Of the* Gymonosophists *and* Druids, *and their Doctrine.*
5. *That this present Age surpasseth all the foregoing Centuries, as to* Wit, *Knowledge and Learning.*

1. ADam was not only the first man in the World, but the first *Wit*: for as being the King of all other inferiour Creatures, I do rationally fancy he was fitted to such an eminent Dignity, with proportionable Gifts, and Talents. This being

ing Gods usual way of providing for his Creatures whensoever he minds to exalt them. I conceive then, first *Adam*'s Understanding fraught with clear and distinct *Idea*'s of all natural things. He was, I doubt not, a good *Alchimist*, and an ingenious Astronomer, an accurate Geometer, a subtile Logician, and a very acute Philosopher. But yet I cannot say that he was a very witty Husband, because of his too simple and blind complacency to his Wife, which occasioned his ruine, and that of his Posterity. We must not think nevertheless that his Fall darkned his Understanding, though it corrupted his will: For I suppose he was not unlike to the Angels, as to this point: of whom the Divines affirm, *non sunt vulnerati in Naturalibus*, after their Sin committed, they retained yet all their natural endowments, as not being wounded in their Intellectuals. He could then fancy, and did really propagate to Posterity a part of his

Wit

Wit and Knowledge: Not that I think *Wit* to be hereditary, ſince we know certainly by daily experience, that the moſt ingenious men beget ſometimes the dulleſt Children. My meaning only is, that he taught his Sons and Daughters, what he himſelf never learned but from God immediately, ſo they became in a ſhort time by his Inſtructions well vers'd in moſt Sciences, and skilful in all Arts, which they invented firſt for neceſſity's ſake, and then for conveniency. Thus *Wit* flouriſhed in the World as by a lineal deſcent, till the days of *Noah: When all Fleſh had corrupted their way, that is their Wit; Omnis caro corruperat viam ſuam.* It was confin'd then in the Ark to a little number, and if the Ark had ſplit, it had intirely periſhed. The *Ægyptians* after the retreat of the Waters from above the Face of the Earth, claimed more right to it for ſeveral hundred years, than any other Nation of the World. Every Crea-

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ture was to them a piece of Divinity, and what signifyed nothing to other Nations, represented to them profound Mysteries. Their *Hieroglyphicks* are evident proofs of their ingenious meditations. To them, as much as to the *Arabians*, we owe the knowledge of Astronomy, and of most other Sciences: Yet as men are obnoxious to various changes, this most ingenious Nation became at length so dull, as to acknowledge, and worship Cats, Dogs and Rats for its Gods. But the *Grecians* succeeding in their Room, took upon them to be the great Instructers of the World, and were never equal'd but by the *Romans*. I know not what to make of *Plato*, whether we should call him a God or a Man: I shall only say, he justly deserves to be stiled Divine, *Divinus Plato*, because of his high Sentiments of God, and those Notable pieces of Divinity he has left to Posterity. *Anacharsis*, *Anaxagoras*, *Pythagoras*, *Euclides*, are really

ally Stars of the first magnitude, and were the greatest *Wits* of their times: But the *Romans* at length subduing the *Grecians*, became their Masters, not only by the happy success of their Arms, but also by their *Wit*, Learning and Eloquence: For if we reflect but a moment upon the present condition of the *Grecians*, we shall instantly conclude, that whensoever the body is enslaved, the mind is commonly subdued, or at least loseth much of its natural vigour and sharpness, because of its dependency upon the body. The *Athenians* under the *Roman* Yoke were no more called then, as before, *Scientiarum Omnium Inventrices Athenæ*, the Inventors of all Arts and Sciences. The Muses had now deserted *Athens* to follow the *Roman* Conquerours, to the Imperial Seat of the World then, *Rome*. The *Romans* now on the other side began to propagate, together with their own Authority, *Wit*, and Knowledge, through the rest of the World: yet

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the *Gymnoſophiſts* flouriſh'd before them, as ſome fancy in the *Eaſt Indies*. I know not what ſort of Men they were, but if we believe the relations of ſome not unlearned Travellours, they taught not very impertinent Doctrines concerning another life, a Rewarder, and Puniſher of Crimes, of the Exiſtency, Omniſciency, Goodneſs and Immenſity of God. 'Tis reported that they delighted much in that pleaſant fancy of Tranſmigration of their Souls; which Doctrine I take to be moſt true in this Senſe, that Men in all ages do ariſe ſo like unto thoſe that have gone before them, as to *Wit*, Sharpneſs and Learning; that we muſt not quarrel much with ſuch as admit a certain repreſentative *Metempſycoſis*, or Tranſmigration of Souls from one Body into another: Which I fancy was the Opinion of the Firſt *Tranſmigrators*, and is conceived to have been the meaning of the *Indian Gymnoſophiſts*. The *Druides* like-

wiſe, before ever the *Roman* Eagles appeared on this ſide of the *Alps*, were look't upon as great *Wits* among the *Gauls*. Yet I could learn almoſt nothing of this Tribe abroad, though I have been very inquiſitive after their Doctrine, Diſcipline, and Manners, but that they lived in remote places, as upon Mountains, where I have ſeen ſome of their Monuments, and in Woods much reſorted to, by the generality of the People that conſulted them upon all occaſions, and doubtful Caſes, as Oracles. Yet I was inform'd that they held the World eternal, and thought it a ſelf-evident Contradiction that any thing ſhould be made of nothing. They could not admit in God any foreſight of contingent effects, as altogether inconſiſtent in their Fancy with their Contingency. Nevertheleſs the *Gauls* were but a blunt and dull ſort of People, under theſe ſelf-conceited and ſpeculative Maſters. Yet no ſooner the *Romans* had poſ-

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ſeſſed themſelves of the greateſt part of the World, but the *Gauls* and moſt other Nations began to improve more particularly their Natural Talents.

2. Nevertheleſs I believe, I ſhall not be contradicted, if I ſay that ſince the *Roman* Empire was torn aſunder by its own diviſions, and inteſtine Broyls, *Wit* and Learning made a greater Progreſs in the World than ever they had done during the proſperous Days of the *Roman* greatneſs. For not to ſpeak of Gunnery, Printing, Sailing, whereof either the *Romans* knew nothing at all, or never came neer the skill of after Ages, they can pretend to no inſight in Chymiſtry, and had made but few diſcoveries in Natural Philoſophy, in compare to what the *Wits* of our Age have made in both, to the great benefit of Mankind. Yea I am of Opinion, that if *Cicero* came now into the World again, he would be forced to ſtudy afreſh his own Tongue, and

learn from us the new ſignifications of many Latine Words, which we either borrow, or invent to expreſs new things, and that were perhaps quite unknown to him: Such I reckon to be moſt Chymical terms, as *Precipitation*, *Solution*, *Stratification*, *Volatiſation*, *&c.* Some of the Antients I confeſs, were Eminent Mathematicians, as *Ptolemy*, *Euclides*, *&c.* But Methinks we have no reaſon to yield to them in this point; ſince beſides many new things we have diſcovered that they never dreamt of; we may juſtly boaſt of the renowned *Napers* Divine Invention, I mean his admirable *Logarithmes*, whoſe Properties and Nature the more you ſtudy, the greater Wonders you ſhall meet with. I take this Divine Art, for I know no Elogium below it, to be the very Key of Mathematicks. Since what formerly could not be done without long and tedious Multiplications and Diviſions, may now be perform'd by a ſimple Addition and Subſtraction, Operations

ons so easie, that a Man but of a mean Capacity may become capable in less than a days time, to teach them.

3. I shall not forget here another no less curious, and more necessary piece of *Wit*, or regarding more nearly the common good. I have seen in *France*, *Holland*, *Germany*, many sad effects of what we call *Herniam* or Rupture: And being curious to know the best Methods of curing it, I convers't the renowned'st Artists, upon this account, in most parts of *Europe*: But could never be satisfied with what I either could invent my self, or learn from others, concerning the main Instruments made use of in this important cure, I mean the Trusses, whether *Umbilical*, or others. But all my doubts were fully cleared, and my curiosity entirely satisfied, since I met with Mr. *Smith* a *Scotch* Gentleman, living in the *Black-Fryers*, in *London*. To do him justice, without the least design of either

ther intereſt or concern, I never met with any either at home or abroad comparable to him in the Art and Skill of curing this ſad Diſtemper. I conceive his chief Secret to conſiſt in two things. Firſt, in making Truſſes ſo light and eaſie to carry, that whereas others ſometimes weigh ſeveral Pounds, whereof I have ſeen one in his own Houſe, his exceed not nine or ten Ounces. *Secondly*, ſo fitted to the Body, that they follow exexactly its movement whether violent or natural, as if they were incorporated in a manner to the Perſon that wears them. He deſigns to publiſh at conveneniency his Method, which undoubtedly will prove a great common Good. But I ſhould weary out your patience, would I be at the pains to ſet down here all the great advantages of this Age we live in, above the foregoing Centuries. Though the Antient *Romans* may juſtly pretend to have been greater Maſters of the *Latine* Tongue than we

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are now: Yet I can inſtance three Linguiſts near our times, that may juſtly be reckoned among the *pureſts* of the Polite Age of *Auguſtus*, I mean *Buchanan*, *Petavius*, *Maffeius*. The firſt is well known, and is moſt natural and ſmooth, whether he writes Verſe or Proſe: upon his account it was ſaid, that

Romani Imperii fuit olim Scotia limes
Romani eloquii Scotia limes erit.

His Tranſlation of the Pſalms is as far beyond that of Father *Magnet's*, the Jeſuite, as a Maſter-piece is before the meer Rudiment of a Prentice. *Petavius* and *Maffeius*, ſo well known all the Learned World over, may be ranged with thoſe of the Primitive times for the Purity of their Style: But however, though we may yield to the *Romans* in this point, and grant that they knew their own Tongue better then Forreigners, yet we ſhall ever pretend

the Advantage in ſeveral other things, of great *Wit*. Our Warlike Engines, our Artificial Fireworks, as Bombs, Carcaſſes, Grenads; Our Teleſcops, Microſcops, *&c.* and a thouſand other obvious pieces of Art to be met with in every corner of *Europe*, do manifeſtly ſhow that our times are improved, if not perhaps in Virtue, at leaſt in real Knowledge, far beyond all the foregoing Ages.

SECT.

SECT. X.

The abuſe of *Wit.*

1. *That we make ſometimes a good uſe of bad things.*
2. *The common and general Cheats put upon Men by Tradeſmen, Lawyers, and others.*
3. *Intereſt, the* Primum mobile *of Mankind.*
4. *The vain and unſucceſsful attempts of Learned Men.*
5. *The fruitleſs labours of ſuch as ſearch after the Philoſophers Stone.*
6. *The Vanity of Judiciary Aſtrology.*
7. *That the Angels know not the Secrets of our Hearts, and why.*
8. *That private Men ought not to meddle with Publick affairs.*

1. WE do often make an ill uſe of the beſt things, as alſo ſometime a good uſe of the worſt. Thus that great Overthrower of the Texture of Humane Bo-

dies, Poyſon, we turn into wholſome Remedies, and Powerful Antidotes. I know nothing worſe than Sin, which nevertheleſs has proved an occaſion of Salvation to many through Humility and Humiliation, its ordinary Effects. St. *Peter* was never truly humble, till by a flat denyal of his Saviour, he became experimentally ſenſible of his own Weakneſs. St. *Thomas*'s Incredulity, or misbelief, wrought not only in him an increaſe of Faith, but likewiſe in the reſt of the Chriſtian World. For I look upon it as a moſt powerful inductive to believe the Myſtery of the Reſurrection, because it occaſion'd the Conviction of thoſe that then doubted of this Important truth, or might perhaps in after times doubt of it. For who can hereafter miſtruſt this point, if he reflects but a moment with what evidence *Chriſt* proved to St. *Thomas* the Realty of his Body: But now 'tis as true on the other ſide, as I was ſaying a little before,

before, that we misuse sometimes the best things, as a sickly and disorderly constitution turns the best Food not into a good Substance, but into pernicious Venom. Thus *Wit*, the Noblest of Natural Gifts, is made often an Instrument of all kind of Wickedness. I conceive it was not said of the Devil only, *Circuit tanquam Leo rugens querens quam devores*, That he runs to and fro like a roaring Lyon, to prey upon, and devour the first he meets with. This is likewise the chief and ordinary business of most Men in this corrupted age we live in. Some indeed like Roaring Lyons hold the World in a perpetual Stir, and Fear, by claiming right to whatever they can reach by their Arms. Others again make not an open War like Lyons, but more crafty like Foxes, lay secret Ambushes to their unthinking Neighbours. I would wish there were no Tradesmen in the World, if Men could live as well without them. I know

indeed

indeed they are thought neceſſary for the Good and Benefit of Mankind; but the unjuſt meaſures they uſe ſometimes for their own private ends, under pretence of promoting the Common Good, makes me ſpeak thus, and wiſh we could want them. For I am of Opinion, that to trade with many, and to Cheat, are much about one. I ſhall not except that Noble, and neceſſary Art I do profeſs my ſelf, wherein I wiſh the number of able, and Conſcientious Men, did equal that of meer Pretenders, and bold Adventurers. I doubt not but there are Good Men of all Trades as of all Religions; yet I have known ſome Godly Tradeſmen, as to their out-ſide, prove at length the greateſt Cheats under Heaven. They had no doubt read in Scripture this paſſage, *Utilis ad omnia pietas*, that Piety is uſeful for every thing: Whence they concluded, that it might be uſeful for the gaining of Money too, the beſt of things in their Conceit: and

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accordingly thought it a piece of Folly and not of *Wit*, to adventure the cutting of a Purse in the High-way, since they could do it with greater security, and certainly by long Prayers, reformed Looks, or by whatever they might gain the esteem of those they deal't withal, and could expect any thing from.

2. I shall say nothing of the Divers and manifold tricks of Lawyers, who become often on a suddain very rich, though by the Law, yet very unlawfully. If men were not mad, they would undoubtedly agree among themselves, and give them less to do: It was not the only sad effect of Original Sin, that our Bodies should be obnoxious to the cruel handling of some Physitians, and our Souls to the interess'd decisions of fanciful Casuists, but likewise that our Goods, Substance and Riches, should be plunder'd and pillag'd, by those very Men who pretend to secure them to us by certain Me-

Methods of equity and Juſtice: But this diſorder, I mean this perpetual reflex upon our own private concerns, is not only to be met with in *Atrio*, in the outer Court, but 'tis got into the very Sanctuary it ſelf, into the Church, and Pulpit, where no ſuch thing ſhould be expected. I doubt not but if we could ſee into the Breaſts of ſeveral Preachers, we ſhou'd there diſcover that their greateſt Zeal aims either at ſome Preferment, if they have none, or a fatter one then that they are poſſeſſed of. Neither do I fear the guilt of a raſh Judgement, by ſpeaking thus freely my mind, ſince 'tis commonly ſaid, though perhaps it be but a meer calumny, that Church-Men diſcourſe more together of their Livings, than of the means how to amend their own, perhaps, or other Mens irregular lives. Yet I will charitably ſuppoſe that this is but the defect of ſome few particular Men, and not of the Generality: For I do leſs wonder to

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ſee a debauch't Clergy-Man, than a *Judas* amongſt *Chriſt*'s Apoſtles. Nevertheleſs I pretend not that Clergy-Men, as well as others, may not make uſe of their *Wit* for their peculiar ends: I allow them then to preach either for a Benefice, or for a better Benefice, provided this be but their Secondary Motive, and not the firſt mover of all their Actions, or provided perhaps, by being inabled to do more good, they pretend to glorifie God more in a Higher Condition, than in a lower: In all this I conceive nothing Irregular: Neither do I deny but that an ingenious Tradeſman may, and ought to gain by his Ingenuity, cheating only, and the Art of Circumventing one another, I condemn; which I obſerve to be but too uſual among 'em: For if they have to do with a man that either underſtands not their Tricks, or ingeniouſly relies upon their Word, and Honeſty, 'tis odds but conſulting their dearly beloved

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Intereſt, more than what Juſtice requires of them, they will pretend to have *uſed him kindly*, as they ſpeak, when they have really put a Cheat upon him. But as the eclipſes of ſome Stars argue not a general darkneſs in all the reſt, what I lately ſaid of Church-Men, may likewiſe be underſtood of Mechanicks, and all Tradeſmen, whereof ſeveral are Conſcientious, and well meaning Men, ſo well grounded in the Maxims of true Honour and Honeſty, that they would not for all the World have done a baſe thing.

3. I am ſatisfyed that men miſuſe not only theſe ingenious faculties they have received from God to the Corruption of their Morals, but likewiſe to the intangling and depraving of their Intellectuals. I laugh more at, than I do pity the unſucceſsful attemps of ſuch as pretend to give us a true Notion of the *Infinite*, that is of a thing infinitely above the reach of our conceiving Faculty, or to in-

inform the World with *Aristotle* what or how many parts either time or matter is compounded of. *Descartes*, if not so subtile as *Aristotle*, is in my Judgement more prudent, for having left untouch't such insolvable, and useless Difficulties. The Pompous Notions of Eternity, as a *perpetuum nunc*, a perpetual Instant, *instans infinitum*, an infinite Instant, *Instans immobile*, an immoveable moment, *Vitæ interminabilis tota simul ac perfecta possessio*, a perfect and whole possession all at once of an interminable life, are but vain and airy Conceits, fitter to embroyl our Understandings, than to give them any New, or real Light towards the discovery of the Object they propose. We may truly say of Eternity what an antient Philosopher said of God, the more we think on it, the less we know what it is; which may be likewise applyed to many other things, commonly thought less inconceivable, as to time, place, motion and

and matter, whereofas I have never read any ſatisfactory Notions, ſo I think it not worth my while to make any new attempts about a Subject which I humbly conceive to be ſome degrees beyond the reach of my weak Abilities. What a ſtrange conceit is it in ſome to conſume whole years, and the greateſt part of their days in ſearching a perpetual movement, & at the ſame time wholly artificial: A *French* Jeſuite ſpent unſucceſsfully a part of his Life, and a conſiderable Sum of Money in this vain attempt, and coming at length without haveing found out the eternal movement, to his laſt end, and eternal reſt, reaped no other thing by the continual, and long Labours of his Life, but this pleaſant Epitaph after his Death, *Patri quærenti motum perpetuum requies æterna.*

4. I take it likewiſe to be a loſs of time, which I would not value, if it proved not alſo ſometimes the loſs of Mens Fortunes, to ſearch after, though

though perhaps it may be found out what they call commonly the Philosophers Stone. A Man of a great Estate, who dyed at length in an Hospital, said, a little before his Death, he could wish his most implacable Enemy no greater misfortune than to become an Alchimist, or a *Chrysopeian*, I mean one that endeavours to find out the Texture necessary for the constitution of a true Gold: This Texture I fancy is known to the Angels, whether good or bad, because they have an intutive and comprehensive Knowledge too, in some degrees, of the whole Creation: But I have just reason to doubt if any Man has as yet stumbled upon it: And which makes equally for my purpose, though we were certain to find out at length this wonderful Art, all would be in vain and lost labour, yea, and of a dangerous consequence too. Because Princes being justly jealous of such industrious Artists, would either use them

them hardly, or keep them in perpetual Priſon, leaſt they ſhould furniſh their Enemies, or their ſubjects, with an eaſie Method of Heaping up Treaſures; which would render them leſs conſiderable, by dividing thus into many hands, and in great quantities, the things they are moſt courted, and reſpected for by the vulgar ſort, Gold and Silver. But I conceive no worſe uſe of *Wit*, than to be buſie about acquiring too much inſight in Judiciary Aſtrology, which a man cannot be intirely addicted to, without being already come to the Years of Dotage in the Opinion of the Wiſer ſort. I often do wonder how rational Men are not deterr'd from the Study of this vain Science, by the very weakneſs of its imaginary Principles, and ſuffer not themſelves to be laught out of it, by the notoriouſly falſe predictions of ſuch as have pretended to the greateſt inſight in this matter. The *Great Duke's* Mule is a known Story; whoſe *Horoſcop* being

being enquired for under the Notion of a Baſtard from thoſe that were then eſteemed moſt eminent in Judiciary Aſtrology; the import of their anſwer was not only what really was not to come to paſs, but what could never happen: For ſome promis'd to this pretended Baſtard the *Empire*, others the *Triple Crown*, ſome would needs have him to become one day a great Lawyer, others a great Captain, and others again a Saint. So extream was the folly of thoſe Irregular Heads, who deſerved not only to be pointed at for their inſufferable Vanity, but likewiſe to be ſeverely puniſh't for daring to thruſt upon the World at this rate theſe flat untruths, and preſuming to play the Prophets, without the leaſt proof of their being inſpired, or ſo much as of a ſufficient Capacity for the Framing of probable conjectures.

4. 'Tis not only in my Judgement a Sin which we ſhould chiefly fear, to conſult with Magicians and Witches, if

if there be any, concerning contingent effects and contingencies; especially such as depend upon the free determination of our wills, which the Angels, of whatsoever colour, if I may so say, know no more than I do. Though because of their natural acuteness, they gues a great deal nearer what we are to determine our selves to, by the present Temper and Disposition of our Bodies. I know indeed that the innate perfection of the Angelical Nature, as all Divines generally teach, requireth a perfect Knowledge of our free Determinations, as well as of our necessary ones. But I am told likewise by the greatest Masters of Divinity, that God never concurs with them to such a Knowledge, because he is resolved to maintain the priviledge of Mankind, whose Prerogative it is, as of other Commonwealths, to have all Freedom, either of concealing from, or communicating to Forreigners their Secrets. Thus if I addres

dreſs my Thoughts to the Devil, or to an Angel, I do not improbably think, that God being now free by my conſent, and yielding up my right from that Obligation he has put upon himſelf, the Angel really knows, and underſtands what I think; but if I do not direct after this manner my Thoughts, or will not diſcover them to any other Creature: God has put a tye upon himſelf, grounded upon the Priviledge of a Free Commonwealth, as that of Mankind is, not to lend a helping hand to the Diſcovery of my ſecret Thoughts. Since then the Devil cannot at the utmoſt frame but very weak conjectures of things to come, eſpecially if they be contingent: It is not only uſeleſs, but a not ordinary piece of madneſs, to take advice from, and conſult with them, who in all appearance have firſt conſulted him.

5. There are other things of great Moment, wherein we may miſapply

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our *Wit*, and ſpend our time not only to no purpoſe, but likewiſe to our great damage too. I am for inſtance but a private Man, and a very inconſiderable Member of the Commonwealth too, ſo as it never was my Lot, nor in all appearance ever will be, to ſhare with others that deſerve it better in the Government of State Affairs; yet if I am as the Traytor *Holloway* ſaid of himſelf, *a too publick Spirited Man*, pretending to meddle with things that I am not anſwerable for, as not being entruſted to my Charge, I neither do in this caſe behave my ſelf, as if I were either Witty, or wiſe. What a piece of folly is it then to cenſure the Actions of our Lord and Soveraign, becauſe perhaps they ſquare not to the fanciful conceits of our irregular Heads. For ſince we can never in reaſon ſuppoſe but that he aims at nothing more than the Peace, Happineſs, and common good of the Nation, as being inſeparable from his

his own concerns, and wellfare: if you perhaps through a criminal miſtake chance to be of another Opinion; you may certainly conclude from thence that you underſtand not the Publick concerns ſo well as he does, who ſits at the Helm, and is by Gods ſpecial command to watch over us all, as a Flock committed to his vigilancy and truſt.

As the Stones cut by the preſcript of an Archytect into Triangles, Squares, Cubes, Pyramids, know not why they are thus ſhaped: For this being the buſineſs of the Architect, or Maſter Maſon, who has conceived a clear and diſtinct Idea of the whole Building, he orders accordingly whatever he thinks fitting for the compleating thereof. Should then thoſe Stones to follow out this compariſon, complain of their being cut after this, or that manner, or of their not being ſet in the Fronteſpiece, rather than in ſome inconſiderable corner of the Building:

Would this in your opinion, be either rational or ſufferable, ſince they know nothing of the Undertakers deſign. We run yet much more counter to reaſon, and the Subordination that God has eſtabliſhed in this World, when we preſume to ſet up for Judges of our Soveraign, or dare to queſtion upon what account he does this or that, iſſue out this or that Order, as if we underſtood better than he, the Publick Intereſt, which God has entruſted to him, not to us. We ſhall never then be uſeful Members to the Commonwealth we make a part of, unleſs we keep within the bounds of our Reſpective Stations. 'Tis then ſafer and a greater piece of Wit in a Tradeſman for inſtance, to mind his buſineſs, and Domeſtick concerns, rather than to aſperſe the Government by his malicious reflections, or which is yet worſe, to write ſeditious Pamphlets, and calumniatory Libels in oppoſition to his Superi-

ours. Such Men have a great account to render one day to God for this disorderly use of their *Wit*. I conceive the Devil himself with his Hellish Tribe, to be but in one point worse than those troublesom Spirits; that he is not capable of Repentance. But I need not enlarge on this Subject, since to the great advantage of the established Government, 'tis daily handled with so much accuracy by that very ingenious, and truly Loyal Gentleman, Sir *Roger L' Estrange*.

SECT.

SECT. XI.

The uſe of *Wit.*

1. *That* Wit *is ſometimes the occaſion of great diſorders.*
2. *That a witty man may live happily in a ſolitude.*
3. *That the common word,* Man is a ſociable Animal, *is only to be underſtood of the duller ſort.*
4. *The Duty of a Chriſtian.*
5. *That the clear light of Reaſon may contribute ſomewhat towards the increaſe of the dark Light of Faith.*
6. *Divine revelation to be propoſed by, and received from the Univerſal Church.*
7. *The vulgar Error, that of* three Phiſitians, two are Atheiſts *confuted.*
8. *The foreſaid Reproach preſſed home to ſome Divines, eſpecially to thoſe of the* Romiſh *Church, with a greater appearance of Truth.*
9. *The*

9. *The uſefulneſs of natural Philoſophy, and the beſt method of Learning.*

10. *That we muſt conform our Diſcourſe to thoſe we converſe with; and not make an affected ſhow of* Wit *before the duller Sort.*

1. IT may be a Paradox, though no untruth, that *Wit* is the worſt of Gods Gifts beſtowed upon Mankind, if we Judge a thing bad, that either is the occaſion or cauſe of evil, and miſchief: For it is not only the Headwel of Rebellion, Sedition, and Hereſie, which we may eaſily diſcover, whether we reflect upon our times, or by a ſtart backwards take a view of the foregoing Ages; but 'tis alſo the Inventer of thoſe innumerable Engins made uſe of by men for the Ruine of Mankind, under pretence either of a neceſſary defence, or juſt attack: Yet as by Malice, or miſapplication, it may be a fit Inſtrument for evil; ſo if we

turn it once the right way, it may prove the moſt uſeful, as undoubtedly it is the moſt ſhining participation of the Divine Nature. And I know not why *Ariſtotle* ſaid, that a Man who can live in a retired ſolitude, muſt be either a God, or a Beaſt: Since for this I conceive nothing elſe requiſite but a not too narrow *Wit*: For *Spiritualis homo omnia judicat*, the Spiritual Man, that's the *Witty*, diſcerns, and makes uſe of every thing. Of ſuch an one 'tis truly ſaid, *Nunquam minus ſolus quam cum ſolus*, that he is never in better company, than when he is with no body; for then in his retired Thoughts he calls himſelf to an account, and examines ſeverely all his own actions, thoughts and Words. I know not then whereupon 'tis grounded, that a Man is a *ſociable Animal*, and loves to live together with his like in Nature and Shape. For I have always obſerved the wittyeſt ſort of men to delight more in their retired Solitudes, than

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in the greateſt Crouds. If this common Maxim be not a vulgar Error, as I believe 'tis none, it cannot be underſtood but of the duller Sort, who being once alone, are in all ſenſe alone, and with no body, becauſe they are no Company to themſelves; I mean they know not how to play the time away, with what either is within or without themſelves: But ſuch as can act the Philoſophers part with whatever they ſee, feel, or touch, do neither need, or incline much to converſe except perhaps thoſe that are of a no leſs, or rather of greater Abilities than themſelves. Nay Books to ſuch men are not neceſſary Companions in their Retirements: For they can want their Company too, though not ſo well as that of Men. One of theſe three they are always converſant with, themſelves, God, or the Obvious Works of his Power, that are without us. I conceive not, 'tis true, what God is; for how ſhould he be what he is, if I could compre-

hend him, yet I may apprehend him to be a being infinitely perfect: that is to ſay, whoſe Perfections are numberleſs. I need not then, if I pleaſe, want a Subject to think on when alone, if conſidering apart thoſe perfections one after another; I meaſure, as far as I can reach, their dimenſions, their length, their breadth, and their depth. So I ſhall now meditate upon his Power, and then contemplate the ſtrange effects thereof in the works of the Creation, which I ſhall always conceive infinitely below what he could have done, or may yet do. I ſhall again repreſent to my ſelf, though very imperfectly, the brightneſs of his Glory in the Sun, Moon and Stars, his conſtancy in the Earth, his activity in the Fire, the depth of his Eſſence in the bottomleſs Seas, and the leaſt of his Creatures ſhall be unto me a fair Copy of his Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and other Perfections.

2. But

2. But if I make no other uſe of my *Wit* than this, I am but a meer Moraliſt, and not a Chriſtian; for as ſuch I muſt lay aſide my Philoſophy, and believe what I conceive not upon the infallible Authority of an obſcure Revelation. Nevertheleſs, tho' my Religion forbids me to play the Philoſopher, yet if I pretend to a rational belief, I preſume nothing againſt its true Maxims. As I look them upon the meer light of Faith to be ſomewhat dark, ſo I know the light of reaſon to be ſomewhat clearer: May not I then joyn thoſe two Lights together, and make perhaps a greater one of them both? I believe the myſtery of the Trinity, though I comprehend it not; I think it not unlawful to flatter my own Weakneſs with the diſcovery of ſome Rudiments thereof in my Soul, as being one in Nature, and threefold in Operation, I mean, as having three diſtinct Faculties, the Memory, Underſtanding and Will. The *Incarnati-*

on is above the reach of an Angelical Underſtanding: The Angels themſelves by the meer light of Nature could not but judge it impoſſible. 'Tis a ſtrange *Metamorphoſis*, that faith only teacheth me to be real. Stile me not nevertheleſs quite impertinent, if for my own ſatisfaction I endeavour to perſwade to my ſelf the poſſibility thereof, by what I ſee daily in Nature, in the grafting of one Tree upon another, ſo that two Natures become now but one by union, and one almoſt individual Principle of their *Common* Productions. The reſurrection of our Bodies, or that after ſo many Changes, and different Shapes of Worms, Serpents, Birds, Fiſhes, or whatever may feed upon us, we ſhall be at length our *numerical* ſelves again, is a thing that I incline to believe upon experience, when I obſerve ſome Liquors or Waters, perfectly corrupted, to recover themſelves, though neither this, nor the foregoing Motives, could

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ever make me a Christian without the Authority of Divine Revelation, which I neither take from the *Romish*, *English*, nor *Greek*, but from the Catholick and Universal Church, conceiv'd by the Unbyass'd and Understanding sort to be compounded of all such, and the like particular true Christian Assemblies. Thus what all true Christians grant, and never debated, this and no other I take to be an article of Divine Faith, necessary to Salvation, if sufficiently proposed. I look upon the rest as *Supernumerary*, or at the utmost as probable opinions, that may be disputed to and fro amongst Schoolmen, but ought not to be impos'd upon Christians, as Articles of Divine Faith, without the belief of which, their Names are rased out of the Book of Life. I believe then not only that there is a Catholick Church, *Credo Ecclesiam Catholicam*, but likewise, *Credo Ecclesiæ Catholicæ*, I believe whatever it unamiously decides:

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for, *Audi Eccleſiam*, hearken to the Church, is a true obligation, but the *Romaniſt* is extreamly prejudic'd, when he means always the *Romiſh* Church, as if it were, as it now ſtands, truly univerſal; whereas 'tis but a Member, and a very unſound one too of that great Body, we muſt all ſubmit to. I have obſerved another common miſtake of the leſs diſcerning Sort of *Romaniſts*, which is this, They pretend to a conſiderable advantage over Proteſtants from Antiquity, but reflect not that their Church is no otherwiſe diſtinguiſh'd from the reformed part of the World, than by meer Novelties, and Myſteries unheard of in the firſt three Centuries: For I know no other material difference between a Proteſtant and a *Romaniſt*, but that the former adheres cloſely to the Doctrine of the Primitive times, whereas the latter takes for an article of Divine Faith, not only what the univerſal Church held from all times, but whatever the particular

cular Church of *Rome* hath declar'd ſince to be reveal'd. Yet becauſe I was ever of opinion that every man muſt ſtand, or fall by the verdict of his own Conſcience; I think it neither fit, nor a good uſe of *Wit* to quarrel with any man upon the account of his Religion.

3. I ſhall therefore do better perhaps, to clear in this point thoſe of my own Profeſſion, I mean the Phiſitians, from a foul and too general aſperſion of the vulgar ſort, alledging that they are not much concern'd with what we call Religion. For 'tis commonly, to our great ſcandal ſaid, *Ex tribus medicis duo Athei*, that of three Phyſitians there are but two Atheiſts. I am without Prejudice, of a quite contrary opinion, and think it no Paradox to ſay, that none are ſo Religious as Phyſitians, or at leaſt, that none have greater opportunities to raiſe their Souls to the higheſt Degree of Perfection: Which if I prove to conviction, nothing more can rationally be required for the taking away

away this general ſcandal of our Profeſſion. What I ſhall ſay of Phyſitians muſt needs be underſtood of their near Relations, the natural Philoſophers, who likewiſe, if we credit the bigotted part of Mankind, are no great Patrons of either Virtue or Religion.

Would one think that two contrary Cauſes could have the ſame Influence, or the ſame effect, yet nothing more conformable to Truth. Thus I hold that as ignorance is commonly the Mother of Devotion in moſt men, I mean in the duller ſort of Mankind; ſo Knowledge, the oppoſite extream, begets undoubtedly Piety and Religion, in ſuch as have eyes to diſcover God in the Works of his Power. But who has a greater conveniency for making of ſuch uſeful Diſcoveries than Phyſitians, whether we conſider the Object of their Art, or the Subject thereof. The former I take to be, whatever is contained in the three Kingdoms, as

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they ſpeak, in the *Animal*, *Vegetative* and *Mineral*: where they cannot but admire that Soveraign being, Fatherly Providence over Mankind, in the production of whatever may prove inſtrumental to the conſervation of our Health and Life. The latter I apprehend to be no other than that wonderful Engine of our Body, whoſe wonderful Structure may furniſh them with higher Sentiments of God, than that of the Univerſe it ſelf. Thus a Phiſitian conſidering this moſt ingenious Fabrick, cannot but raiſe his thoughts towards the Maker thereof. For no man in his *Wits* will take the *Coition*, or rather *Cohalition* of all the parts of our Body into ſuch a comely and proportionable texture, to be meer fortuitous, and not the real effect of Art and Wiſdom. I know not then whereon is grounded the general prejudice againſt this noble and neceſſary Science, which the Divines themſelves, eſpecially thoſe of the

Romiſh

Romiſh perſwaſion ſeem to be more concerned in than Phyſitians. For he was not perhaps guilty of a very flat untruth, who inverting thus the common word ſaid, *Ex tribus Theologici duo Athei*, That of three Divines its odds but two are Atheiſts, or in my leſs ſevere judgment perhaps, meer Deiſts; becauſe pretending ſometimes to circumſcribe our Myſteries within the Circumference of their narrow Underſtandings; they often fall from believing, what by their Weak Reaſon they cannot reach, and ſo turning Chriſtianiſm into Deiſm, they ceaſe to be in their Hearts what for intereſt ſake they make an outward Profeſſion of. The *Romiſh* Divines, to the great Scandal of the World, buſie themſelves in their Schools, in laying open the Arguments that humane acuteneſs may frame againſt the poſſibility of *Chriſt's* Incarnation; as if their anſwers grounded upon theſe obſcure principles of Faith, could prove evident con-

confutations of ſuch Objections, as ſeem to us to rely upon Evidence. I know no ſhorter way than this to Deiſm, and thence by degrees to Atheiſm; when they teach that the moſt illuminate Angel could not by the meer light of Nature fall into the leaſt ſuſpicion of the poſſibility of an Hypoſtatical Union; do they not give occaſion to the weaker ſort to think that this Myſtery is not only above, but againſt reaſon? Yet I was ſcandaliz'd at nothing more than neither to hear, nor propoſe any demonſtration of the exiſtency of God, which they pretend not to confute with a ſhow of probability, as if Atheiſm were a probable opinion, which ſeems to be the conſequence of their Doctrine; for though each one claims to a demonſtration of Gods being actually in nature, yet no two do ever agree upon the ſame: what the one affirms, the other denies with equal grounds, as he pretends, from Reaſon: So that by their principles

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they muſt hold it probable that there is no demonſtration of a Soveraign *Being*, which I look upon as a dangerous, and a too bold Aſſertion.

4. The only then profitable uſe of *Wit* in ſuch matters of Religion as over-reach our weak Capacity, conſiſts in *captivating* our Underſtanding by an humble ſubmiſſion to the belief of the Univerſal Church.

As to other inferiour Subjects, I know nothing fitter to improve our Intellectuals, than the Study of natural Philoſophy: For it filleth not our Heads with vain and airy Notions, with inſignificant School Terms, and Pedantick Niceties, but aims at the promoting in us of real Knowledge: Yet I am not ſo much out of conceit with the School Doctrine, as to put no value upon it at all. That part of it they call artificial Logick, I apprehend not only to be uſeful, but neceſſary for the quickning of our diſcourſing Faculty: for I have always obſerved ſuch as underſtand not the

Art

Art of a Syllogiſm, or the *Ariſtotalian* Method of drawing Coherent Concluſions, to raiſe often very illegal Inferences, which you can ſcarce make them ſenſible of, becauſe being not acquainted with the general, and particular Laws of a *formal* diſcourſe; they ſeldom diſtinguiſh between what is concluded *vi formæ*, as they ſpeak, and what is only concluded *vi materiæ*. I mean when a propoſition is eſſentially true, and becauſe of its dependancy upon another, and only accidentally, or becauſe of the Subject it expreſſeth. Yet I am of opinion that the Analytick Method is to be preferr'd before the Syllogiſtick, becauſe, beſides that the former, mean of analyſie and reſolution contains, if well manag'd, the Subſtance of the latter; it bringeth along with it more Ornaments than is conſiſtent with naked *Enthimema's*, & harſh Syllogyſms. I know not nevertheleſs if any of theſe Methods be fit for young Beginners; for I incline much

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to think, that our Imagination, tho' generally ſtronger in our greener years, than our Judgement, yet being more various and changeable than in our Riper Days, muſt needs firſt of all be brought to ſome degree of conſiſtency: which may eaſily be done by following the cuſtom of ſome Antient Maſters, who would have their Scholars to learn firſt the Mathematicks, as the eaſieſt Principles and Demonſtrations both of practical and ſpeculative Geometry; Not ſo much upon the account of the great Evidence of ſuch Sciences, as chiefly becauſe they depend upon Figure and Proportion, two things neceſſary and ſufficient for the fixing of our inconſtant Imaginations.

5. I have no more to ſay of the uſe of Wit at preſent, except what may regard our familiar and daily Converſations: We are then to reflect with whom we have to do: For if they be really our Maſters in all ſenſe, or judged generally beyond the

the common reach; whatever abilities we find our ſelves gifted with, we muſt rather keep them cloſe than diſplay them vainly in their preſence, leaſt we ſeem either to think too much of our ſelves, or not enough of them: To whom, as occaſion ſerves, we ought to pay without flattery, the Homage due to their grand *Genius's*. If perchance we converſe with thoſe that we judge not ſuperiour to our ſelves, we may take more Freedom, but if we are in Company of the duller ſort, we muſt conform our Diſcourſes to their Capacity, and not to our own. For to behave our ſelves otherwiſe, I mean to endeavour in our Converſe with ſuch men, to ſay nothing but what carryeth along with it a certain Character of *Wit*, and Sharpneſs, would be a no leſs piece of Folly then, as they commonly ſay, *Projicere Margaritas ante porcos*, to caſt Pearls before Swine, becauſe they could neither digeſt, nor be ſenſible of ſuch a Spiritual Food.

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I remember upon this occaſion a paſſage of two Gentlemen, who hearing a third ſay, that an Embaſſadour was an *Honourable Spy*, oppoſed warmly this expreſſion, as carrying in its Front an apparent Contradiction, and that an honourable *Spy* could amount to nothing more than an *Honourable Rogue*. Though they ſeem'd to be ingenious enough, yet they could not be made ſenſible of their miſtake, nor conceive ſomewhat of *Wit* in this reflecting way of ſpeaking, and more Senſe too than every mean Capacity is aware of.

SECT.

SECT. XII.

That great Wits are not at all times equally Witty.

1. *Several imperfections of great Wits, and why they make not always use of their Wit.*
2. *That our Passions are great obstacles to the exercise of our* Wit.
3. *Some particular causes of our accidental dulness.*
4. *A wholsom advise to* Patients.
5. *The cause why sometimes they recover not, or not so soon.*
6. *Several notable defects observable in some famous Writers.*
7. *An advice to such as write Books.*

1. AS I conceive nothing to be of a long continuance that may have an end, so I think nothing in rigour perfect, that contains not all Imaginable perfections; I know not

not then why we ſhould call any man perfect, and not rather in compare to others leſs Imperfect; ſince the imperfection of Mankind conſiſts not only in the real want of ſeveral perfections, but likewiſe in this, that men are not always capable of making uſe of theſe great Abilities, that God perhaps has beſtowed liberally upon them, which may, and does frequently happen upon ſeveral accounts.

Firſt, becauſe the perfecteſt Soul in the World is but of a limited Capacity, and conſequently cannot at all moments apply it ſelf to every Object with an equal attention: For *Pluribus intentus minor eſt ad ſingula Senſus*, the more objects we conſider of at once, the leſs notice we take of each one in particnlar. And if it be true that ſome of the Antients, as *Cæſar*, if I miſremember not, could write, ſpeak, and dictate at the ſame time; ſure I am, he could perform neither of the three, with that accuracy, he

had he done either of them ſeverally. 'Tis then the prerogative of a Soveraign being only to underſtand all things equally; the perpetual contemplation of his own eſſence not hindring him from looking into the Secrets of our Hearts, and weighing the leaſt of our Thoughts: Men then even the Wittyeſt ſort, by reaſon of their limited abilities, when too much applyed to one object, ſeem to forget all others: And thus diſcovering their own Weakneſs, become ſometimes a Subject of laughter and ſport to thoſe they chance to converſe with. St. *Thomas*, deſervedly called the Angel of the School, was look't upon as very dull and ſimple, when at the Emperors Table he broke out on a ſudden into theſe words, *Concluſum eſt contra Manacheos*, the Conviction of the *Manichees*! Or its concluded againſt the *Minachees*, which though reported by ſome as a ſign of his profound Wit, and great Capacity; I take in the quite contrary,

to be an infallible mark of a very limited Genius, as not being capable of performing two things at the ſame time: But the moſt obſervable deficiency of thoſe Men, we eſteem great Wits, lies here, that they are not only not equally capable of many things at once, but what ſometimes they can do to admiration, they are again within a ſhort time intirely unfit for. Thus a mans converſe will be often charmingly pleaſant, and witty, whom you ſhall find at other times dull and heavy. Which I may in *Second Inſtance* ſuppoſe to proceed from a certain neceſſary, or voluntary Wearyneſs of the Soul: For I ſee no cauſe why it may not fall weary, as well as the Body. The difference only is that the latter becomes weary becauſe of the loſs of its moſt lively parts, the Spirits; the former becauſe of its limited nature, and weak faculties, or rather through a natural deſire of change and variety. *Thirdly*, we are not our ſelves

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upon all occaſions, becauſe of our too green and domineering paſſions: whether they be of ſorrow, envy, hatred or anger, which turn all our natural ſharpneſs and Vivacity into malicious contrivances, and fits of Fury. When we have conceived an extream averſion from any perſon, by inveighing againſt him upon all occaſions, we ſhow no more Wit than can be expected from a ſcolding Woman: No wonder then if we ceaſe ſometimes to be ingenious, ſince we are often over-ruled by our undaunted paſſions, which overthrow yet more the inward temper of our Souls, than the outward Texture of our Bodies. Nevertheleſs we muſt confeſs that it is not always in our Power, either to ſpeak or write wittily at all times, or with that accuracy we are really capable of. The Great *Homer* is not always himſelf, but ſometimes of a dull and ſleepy Humour, *Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus*; but I underſtand Man-

kind better than to wonder at ſuch accidental deficiencies in the greateſt Men, becauſe I am ſenſible of this common, but moſt true Word, *Nemo omnibus horis ſapit*, No man has always his Wits about him. For as the very change of Weather changeth ſometimes the Temper of our Bodies, ſo it does alter that of our Souls: We ſhall then at ſome Hours of the day both write, and ſpeak eaſily, and wittily too, good ſenſe: At ſome others, we may ſcratch our heads long enough before we awaken, and revive again our almoſt dead Spirits. Which gives me occaſion ſometimes to think, though no juſt grounds, that our Soul is really material, and of a very changeable Texture too, ſince it paſſeth ſo eaſily, and in ſuch a ſhort time from one extream to another: For I would conceive in its ſuppos'd Spiritual Nature, a more conſtant and durable Temper. Yet I apprehend that ſeveral things may occaſion in us this accidental dulneſs:

And

And firſt, the very Company we converſe with, either we eſteem not enough, or too much. In the former caſe we want encouragement to endeavour to ſhow our Wit, becauſe we think not thoſe we ſpeak to worth our while, or deſerving our peculiar application: In the latter we are kept in awe by a prudent fear of the Cenſure, and inward ſlight of ſuch as we have a high Eſteem, and Veneration for. But as I know nothing more prejudicial to Wit, than Want and Poverty; ſo I conceive thoſe common Sentences, *Ingenii largitor venter, vexatio dat intellectum, &c.* that Hunger, Vexation and Trouble do make men witty, to be but meer illuſions, and vulgar Errors grounded only upon this, that the very dulleſt of Men in great Straits will make odd ſhifts to rid themſelves of the preſent Neceſſity. We muſt needs then conteſs, *Virtutibus Obſtat res anguſta domi*, That a light *Purſe*, as the *Scots* ſay, makes a *hea-*

vy Heart, and very unfit to exert thoſe not ordinary Abilities we are perhaps gifted with. Beſides, ſuch is the Nature of Mankind, that without ſome encouragement, or proſpect of reward, 'tis not in our Power to do our utmoſt endeavours in any enterprize whatſoever.

2. I pretend to no extraordinary Skill in Phyſick, yet I know no curable diſtemper; but methinks I could cure, provided I want not the neceſſary encouragements from my Patient, which if you look upon as a piece of Covetouſneſs, you diſcover more of a cenſuring, than of a ſharp and conſidering Genius: For as it is highly my concern, that you recover your Health by my care. So I cannot but deſire your recovery moſt earneſtly, tho' I expected no juſt ſalary for my laudable endeavours: Whereby I intend only to give this wholſom advice to the Patient, as much for his concern, as for the Phyſitians intereſt, that if he

he fail to do his duty, 'tis odds if the other, how conſcientious and skilful ſoever perform ſucceſsfully his part, not deſignedly, nor through Malice, but becauſe ſuch is the natural conſtitution of Men, that they cannot ſerve God himſelf but upon the account of ſome proportionable reward. So if you would have your Phyſitian take notice of every particular circumſtance of your diſtemper, to apply uſefully his Skill for your recovery, it will be a piece of Wit in you not to let him want too long his due. For elſe it will not be in his Power to make uſe, to your advantage, of that Wit God has given him, becauſe you encourage him not, by doing what he juſtly expects, and may lawfully require. I doubt not but more Patients have periſhed through their own narrowneſs, than by either the Ignorance, or wilful neglect of their Phyſitians.

3. I know not why ſome Nations now, as the *Grecians*, and others, produce ſcarce a Wit in an Age, which formerly were in ſo great repute throughout the whole World, but becauſe they are not awakened out of their Lethargy by that powerful inductive to do great things, a proportionable reward, which may quicken them into life again thoſe, whoſe Wits ſeem to be buryed in their Bodies. So thoſe Princes that are great promoters of Learning, and Learned Men deſerve from them an *Apotheoſis*, a ſort of Divine Honour, becauſe they hold of them the very Life of their Souls, their Wit, by the daily encouragements of their Princely Liberalities.

I muſt in this place remember you, that the greateſt Wits ceaſe ſometimes to give light before the years of Dotage, either becauſe the Organs without which the perfecteſt Soul cannot make us ſenſible of its Abilities, are corrupted by our irregularities,

ties, or perhaps becauſe of the Natural limitation of Humane Capacity, which could reach no further.

4. As to the wittyeſt Authors, there is not only a difference among them, ſuch as is between different Stars: But the ſame Author is ſometimes ſo unlike unto himſelf, that one would take him to be another. I admire the Firſt Six Books of the *Ænead*, and the Sixth above all. I meet with nothing in all the reſt that deſerves my admiration. *Ovid's* Love-Letters are incomparably well done, they are penn'd moſt ſmoothly and wittily; but he neglected himſelf too much in thoſe he wrote in the place of his baniſhment. There are ſome excellent pieces in his Metamorphoſis; ſuch I always fancied his deſcription of the Old *Chaos*, and the Rudiments of the World, *Phaeton's* journey to his Father the *Sun*, the debate between *Ajax* and *Uliſſes*, *&c.* I admire nothing more in *Lucan* than the unevenneſs of his Style, he flies high, and on a ſuddain low

again in the ſame Page, and ſometimes in the ſame Verſe; you ſhall read none ſo elevated upon ſome occaſions, and none ſo flat on other rencounters: *Claudian* and he are near of a Temper. *Livy* by his long and Minute narratives wears out his own Wit, and the Readers patience. His beſt pieces in my Judgement are his *Harangues*, or thoſe ſenſeful Speaches he puts in the Mouths of Stateſmen, and great Captains. I have had alſo a great Veneration for *Cicero*, yet I am very ſenſible that he is not himſelf upon all occaſions. I find few of his Plea's ſo well penn'd, as that he made in defence of *Milo*. He knows not what he would be at in his Book *de Natura Deorum*, and his beſt Interpreters, I fancy, as *Eſcalopier*, *&c.* and others, do but gueſs at his meaning. As to the Accuracy, and Politeneſs of Expreſſion, he's every where the ſame, and the beſt Maſter of the Latine Tongue *Ariſtotle* is beyond envy it ſelf, tho not

not every where beyond reach: the new Philoſophers ſpeak more diſtinctly, and give more ſenſible Notions of moſt things. His beſt Pieces I take to be his artificial *Logic*, or Art of arguing conformably to certain infallible Rules, his *Politicks*, his *Poetry*, his *Rethorick* and his *Morals*. He is a very Obſcure Metaphyſitian; becauſe he handled ſuch matters as are beyond the reach of Humane Underſtanding, and thought it not enough to ſay that every thing was *this* or *that* by a various Texture, but would needs further enquire into the Properties of the compounding parts, whether they were *Finite*, or *Infinite*, obnoxious to an endleſs diviſion, or not, *&c.* Thus he propoſeth to us palpable, and intelligible difficulties, but very obſtruſe, myſterious, and unſatisfactory ſolutions.

What I have ſaid of the Antients, I may likewiſe ſay of our Modern Wits. For there are but few of 'em eminent in every thing, and moſt of them

them eminent in nothing. But I must not end this Section without giving you some rational account of this unevenness observable in most may Authors. First then we have recourse to that common answer to all such difficulties, the limitation of humane Capacity; but because this is too general, I shall say something no less to the purpose, and more particular. I may be allowed then to say in Second Instance, that our own indiscretion is commonly the cause of this disorder: For as we never write wittily, but when our Imagination is exalted to a certain degree of heat, destructive to our cold dulness; so when our Spirits are spent by a long and serious application, it would then prove a piece of prudence in us to lay aside our Pen, and meditate no more on the Subject till we recover our lost Spirits, and first vigour. I believe *Vigil* kept this Precept, since he spent neer Thirty years in the composure

poſure of his Poem; but our Folly is ſuch, that black paper we muſt, though our Soul be not able to act its part, becauſe of the ſuppoſed want of Neceſſary Inſtruments, furniſhing us with as lively *Idea's* as before. Which fancyful Humour I apprehend to be the true Cauſe, why we write not always ſo well as really we could have done, if we had broken off our work till the return of our better temper and diſpoſition. Whereof I find a not unfit Analogy in a Subject ſomewhat like to that we now treat of. I ſee no other cauſe of the great difference as to Wit among Children of the ſame Parents, but becauſe the latter obſerve not the fitteſt times for the act of generation, coming together, when their Seeds are either yet raw, or not ſo elaborated and ſpirituous, as is requiſite. So if marryed People underſtood the critical, and fitteſt Minute for this duty of Marriage, or would contain themſelves ſo long as

they

they were not fit for it, they would undoubtedly be more ſatisfied with their Children, than ſome of them have reaſon to be; becauſe I fancy the former would not be ſo unlike one another, as to the endowments of the Mind. We may proportionably diſcourſe at the ſame rate of our Spiritual Children, our *Writings*: They may all reſemble one another in not unlike ſtains of *Wit*, if we manage our ſelves aright in conceiving of them.

SECT

SECT. XIII.

The art of writing wittily.

1. *Why ſome do ſpeak ill, and write well, and ſome do write ill, and ſpeak well.*
2. *That we ought firſt to conſider, before we undertake to write, if the Subject be not beyond our natural Abilities.*
3. *What uſe we are to make of Authors. That we wrong our ſelves by not peruſing our own Wit.*
4. *That ſome are profeſt Robbers of other Mens Works, as ſeveral* Germans, *and other ſubtile Thieves, as not a few* French *undoubtedly are.*
5. *That we muſt not be too poſitive in our aſſertions.*
6. Ariſtotle's *obſcurity inſtanc'd in ſome few examples.*

1. IT may be thought not out of purpoſe to enquire in this place why

why ſome do ſpeak ill and write well, and on the contrary, why others ſpeak well, and write ill. The difficulty I confeſs is conſiderable, and I am not fully reſolved in the caſe. Yet it may be ſaid that this proceeds from ſome of the different Characters of Wit we have ſpoken of elſewhere. For ſome are ſlow in conceiving, becauſe, perhaps they have a too weak Underſtanding, and fear too much to be miſtaken; ſo their utterance upon this account is very uneaſie: and ſuch ſpeak their Thoughts ſo imperfectly, that one would think they had but a very ſuperficial Underſtanding. Nevertheleſs they are ſometimes excellent Pen-Men, and the fitteſt Men in the World to appear in Print; becauſe the uneaſineſs of their utterance comes rather from a certain warineſs, and Weakneſs perhaps too of the Imagination, than from any real defect of Judgement. But as for thoſe that ſpeak well, and write ill; if by

this

this expreſſion we mean that ſome do ſpeak great Senſe, who cannot write ſenſefully; I think I may be allowed to ſay, that there is no ſuch thing poſſible. For whoſoever can ſpeak Sence, I know not why he may not likewiſe couch it upon Paper, if he pleaſe. But if perchance we underſtand by ſpeaking well and wittily, a certain facility, eaſineſs of expreſſion, the Volubility of the Tongue, or a certain ſhow of Eloquence without either great Sence, or acuteneſs, there are I confeſs, many half-witted Men, and more yet of the Weaker Sex that ſpeak well, though they write not wittily, becauſe of the ſhallowneſs of their Judgement, which is rather a help than a hindrance to their talkative humour; eſpecially if they have, as commonly they want it not, any quickneſs of Fancy. For ſuch People, 'tis no leſs uſeleſs to preſcribe Rules of writing wittily, than to teach Fools how to ſpeak to the purpoſe.

2. The

2. The first Precept then of this art, I conceive to be no other but the consideration of the Subject we are to treat of. We must in the first instance consider if it be not perhaps, beyond the reach of our Abilities: For, *Non omnia possumus omnes, Nec omnis fertomnia tellus*, there are but very few equally capable of every thing; Was not *Cicero* the Prince of Orators, but had no inclination towards Poetry, wherein *Ovid* was eminent; who again had no other considerable Talent we know of. The latter had proved, I fancy, a very ordinary, and less perhaps than an ordinary Writer of Plea's, and the former but a dull, uneasie and constrained Poet. Our first Study then must be of our selves, and of our *Genius*, to know, *Quid valeant Humeri, quid ferre recusant*, what we are really capable of. If then perhaps we are sensible of our fitness for any Science whatsoever, we may be the more daring to write our thoughts indifferently

ferently upon any Subject: But this we cannot certainly know without a frequent Tryal of our Capacity. However, 'tis moſt certain there is ſtill one thing we are fitter for, than for any other, and to this we muſt apply our ſelves more particularly: but it may be here enquired, how ſhall we know what Nature has made us chiefly for? I anſwer, Firſt, almoſt after the ſame manner that we know our Vocation, or Call to any State of life, as to a marryed, or ſingle life; by the very inclination we find in us to this, or that kind of Study, which not being given to us in vain, muſt needs be a ſign of our fitneſs to ſucceed therein. I anſwer Secondly, whatever we do with greateſt facility, that undoubtedly we are born to. Thus if I conceive more eaſily whatever depends upon Figure, ſhape and Proportion; or if I can make a Mathematical Demonſtration with leſs difficulty than a Verſe, or a Poem; I ſhall rather apply my ſelf to Mathematicks than to Poetry. 3. Now

3. Now having found out by the foregoing Method what I may with beſt ſucceſs undertake, I muſt then follow theſe particular Rules, and Precepts that regard the Subject I write of. But my chief care ſhall be to peruſe often thoſe that I know certainly to be eminent in that Art, or Science I apply my ſelf to: Thus if I mind to write natural Philoſophy, I ſhall conſult the *Engliſh Philoſopher*, *Boyle*, or the Famous *Verulam*. Yet without any deſign to plunder or pillage them, for I know nothing more deſtructive to the improvement of Wit, than the ſtealing humour of ſome Writers, who ſometimes make great Volumes of other Mens Labours; which is not ſo much always a ſign of their incapacity, as of their Lazyneſs, and miſtruſt of their own Abilities; if we can be at the pains but to think by our ſelves, and to write nothing but our own thoughts, we may perhaps become at length ſenſible by experience, that we

we are nothing inferiour to thoſe, whoſe borrowed Wit we had made our own. 'Tis a great Commendation of an Author, when it may be truly ſaid, that what he writes is not borrowed, which is not ſo to be underſtood, as if he ſhould write always things never any dreamt of before him; for this is impoſſible, ſince the *Beaux Eſprits* muſt needs ſometimes jump together by chance, as to the Subſtance, though not as to the Tour, and manner of Writing. My meaning is, that an ingenious Man ought not to copy out any mans Works, but write his own Thoughts and Meditations, as if he were alone in the World without the help of Books. I know no Author in this Age ſo much ſearcht into as the *Famous Robert Boyle*, and by ſuch as enrich their works with his ingenious contrivances, though they are neither ſo civil, nor ſo grateful, as to make an Honourable mention of him. *Takenius* has been more guilty

of

of this fault than any other that I know of. But to return to what I was saying, how can we ever improve that *Wit* God perhaps has bestowed upon us in a larger measure than we are aware of, if we never make use of it, or exercise it, which we do not, though we write every year a Volume, so long as we are meer Transcribers, and not true Authors. As the *French* do frequently reproach this to the *Germans*, so they say commonly, *Qu'un livre d' Allman, cest un livre ou il n'y a rien de l' autheur*, *That there is nothing in a* Germans *Book, of the Author, but his Name.* Which I confess ingenuously not a few of that Nation to be guilty of. But yet whilst they put other Mens productions in room of their own, which perhaps would prove as good, if not better then theirs, they are so just as to name the Authors with proportionable Elogiums; upon which account I look upon them as publick and profest Robbers, rather

ther than ſubtile Thieves, which I take to be the Character of the *French* Writers, who ſteal wherever they meet with any thing that may ſerve their turn, and returning no acknowledgement to the Author from whom they take they will cunningly, & wittily too, pretend they have ſome reaſon not to acknowledge the theft, as being moulded now into another frame and ſhape; which ſome of them do to the very deceiving of the Author himſelf at the firſt view: and this I reckon to be the height of the *French* Wit, as ſcarce reaching to the invention of any thing, but perhaps of new modes: For this Nation is now ſo us'd to plunder, and pillage their Neighbours, that if they lay aſide what they have ſtoln out of *Spaniſh*, *Italian*, *German* and *Engliſh* Books, what is properly their own, would not make a very large Volume.

4. Being then fully reſolved to be Authors, rather than either Robbers with the *Germans*, or Thieves with

with the *French*; we ſhall conceive firſt a general deſign, whereunto all the particulars of the piece muſt be either directly, or indirectly related: But though I eſteem a mean Author more than either a *German Robber*, or a *French Thief*; yet I do allow thoſe following uſes of other Mens Labours: Firſt I may, and ought to peruſe them for the quickning of my fancy, and for the acquiring of what we call, a *Style*, or an accurate and polite elocution; not that we ought to borrow their *witty Words*, *Leurs bons mots*: For 'tis better to utter our ſelves in our own language, than to ſpeak in other Mens terms: But my meaning is, that the peruſal of what they have written, whether it regard our Subject or not, may by heightning our Imagination, hinder us from a too flat way of writing. Thus if I mind to write an Elegy, I ſhall firſt run over ſome choice piece of *Ovid*, or one of his more polite Letters. It will be uſeful to read

ſome

ſome Paſſages of *Cicero*, *Virgil*, *Livy*, *&c.* before I undertake to write a *Latine* Oration, an Hiſtory, or Poem. The ſame advice is to be followed, what Language ſoever we write in, whether it be *French* or *Engliſh*. If the Authors we peruſe have written upon the ſame Subject, we muſt endeavour to improve what they have ſaid, or confute their Errors that deſerve to be taken notice of: wherein we are to take heed above all things not to be too poſitive, as if we pretended to demonſtrate every thing we ſay; for this would betray us to be none of the moſt knowing ſort: For I think it no Paradox to ſay, that the very things we are ſure of, and hold for undoubted Truths, we can no more prove by the Light of an undeniable Demonſtration, than what we look upon as meer Opinions, and uncertain Conjectures. For ſince I know nothing but by the help of my fallible, and often failing Senſes; how

do I know but I am impos'd upon by the very things I think, I touch, I feel, I hear. This affirmative way of debating may be allowed in the Schools, where the conceived infallibility of the Masters is necessary, both for gaining and conserving their Credit among their Scholars; but it must be avoided, *cane pejus & angue*, above all things by a sober, witty and judicious Writer. This necessary moderation is observable every where in the Works of the renowned *Boyle*: I do certainly believe he thinks more before he says, *such a thing perhaps is*, than others do before they positively affirm, it is undoubtedly so.

5. Obscurity is another defect we must be careful to shun, since, *prima virtus orationis perspicuitas est*, the chief and most necessary Ornament of any discourse, is it perspicuity and clearness. I have a very ill opinion of a mans Capacity, when whatever he writes is a mistery to the Understanding sort: Yet I shall be so far fa-

favourable to the *Chymists*, as to think there may be some real secrets, and Mysteries known only to themselves, which they will not reveal to others. But I must beg their Pardon, if I incline more to believe their affected Obscurity to be nothing else but a Childish vanity, or rather a specious Nonsence, proposed to the World in obscure Terms, in order to gain Credit among the ignorant sort of Men, who commonly admire nothing more than what they least understand. This defect is justly reproacht by the New Philosophers to the *Peripateticians*, and to *Aristotle* himself, especially in his definitions where perspicuity is most expected, and is most necessary.

I shall instance some few examples for proof of what I say. If then you ask *Aristotle* the nature of what we call a *quality*, he shall give you instantly this misterious definition, *Qualitas est a qua quales quidam dicuntur.* I know not how either to *En-*

gliſh, or make ſenſe of this obſcure Notion; but 'tis all one as if you had defin'd white to be that whereby we are made white. I am ſure every rational Man underſtands better what *movement* is, than its definition given by *Ariſtotle*, *Actus entis in potentia quatenus in potentia*, which beſides its obſcurity, far beyond that of the thing it intends to clear, is, Firſt, ſuch a piece of Nonſence, that I defie any man in the World to make intelligible *Engliſh* of it, without a large Comment; and Secondly, it contains an evident contradiction in *adjecto*, as they ſpeak, in the very terms: Since the former words, *actus entis in potentia*, are altogether inconſiſtent with the latter, *Quatenus in potentia*. *Locus*, or place, we undoubtedly conceive better, than what *Ariſtotle* ſaith, in order to furniſh us with a clear Notion thereof: For I thought always I underſtood in ſome meaſure what it was, till I heard *Ariſtotle* call it, *Superficies prima acris ambientis immobilis*, the

immoveable ſurface of the ambient Air. Now my weak head is full of endleſs doubts, and I underſtand no more what I underſtood ſome thing of before, by its own ſelf-evidence; for firſt I underſtand not how the ſurface of the Air is immoveable: Secondly, I know not why a Body a Stone, for inſtance, in *vacuo*, ſhould be no where, becauſe it is not ſurrounded with Air. I apprehend Thirdly, the Natural place of every thing to be nothing elſe but the Imaginary and immoveable ſpace that it fills with its three Dimenſions, depth, breadth and length, which *Ariſtotle's* definition makes no mention of.

I ſhall ſay nothing of that other Notion of his relating to *Time*, which he calls, *Motus ſecundum prius & poſterius*, that is literally, and *verbatim*, *a movement* according to what is before, *and according to what is behind*, what more clear? *Auditum admiſſi riſum teneatis amici.* But to ſpeak ingenuouſly; all this argues

no defect of Capacity in *Aristotle*, but only betrays him to be guilty of attempting I shall not say pretending to give us exact definitions of things that are above the reach of Humane Capacity; such as *Time*, *Place*, *Movement*, *&c.* because they are primary Principles, whereof we may give perhaps, some imperfect Descriptions, but no true Notions.

We are not only to shun obscurity in our definitions, which ought to be always self-evident to any man, understanding the terms they are conceived in, but likewise in every particular Word, and Sentence, if it can be avoided. For I take it to be a vulgar, and a silly error, that great Wits are commonly obscure, misterious and cloudy; because, as I am fully perswaded that perspicuity is the chief, and most necessary Ornament of our Discourse, so I conceive it to be the best Character of a true Wit. We must then give to whatever

ever we write, all the Evidence, and plainess the Subject can bear, which we shall perform the more easily, if we shun with all possible care a too great multitude of superfluous Repetitions, as likewise Subjects, that are not only hard to be understood, but which no Humane Capacity can compass. A too great affectation of harsh and hard Words, of far fetcht Expressions is justly condemned by the Polite and wittiest sort of Writers: For since Words are the Images of our thoughts, we must make choice of those that are their best representatives. Whatever then is made use of in common discourse by such as speak well, and naturally, that is fittest for us to make choice of. Thus our Style shall be smooth, natural and easie, without either obscurity, or that misterious Nonsense that some weak Heads naturally incline to; and is termed by the *French*, *du Galimathias*. But I know nothing that may contribute more towards the

clearneſs, and ſmoothing of our diſcourſe, then a fit and ingenious compariſon, not more inſiſted on than is neceſſary, nor too frequent. The *Engliſh Philoſopher*, I mean the *Famous Boyle*, underſtands better than any I ever yet read, the art of illuſtrating, and proving too, what he affirms by witty and natural compariſons. As his Style is every where ſmooth and clear; I know no better Maſter of natural Philoſophy, not only upon the account of his Doctrine and ingenious Solutions of the greateſt difficulties, but likewiſe for his extraordinary perſpicuity and clearneſs.

SECT.

SECT. XIV.

If Women can be really witty.

1. *Why ſome alledge that Women cannot be really witty.*
2. *Some weak Objections anſwered.*
3. *That their Wit appears moſt in managing of intrigues, whether good or bad.*
4. *A true Story of a Ladies dexterity to be rid of two Husbands.*
5. *That as little men may be comely, not beautiful, ſo few Women can be reckoned among the* beaux E'ſpirits, *though we may allow ſeveral of them place among thoſe whom the* French *call* Eſprits jolly, *or jolly Wits.*

1. SOme, who make it their whole buſineſs to inveigh againſt Women, though perhaps they be not quite out of conceit with them, may be apt to think that they are rather

naturally wilful, than Witty; becauſe, perhaps, they were made of one of *Adams* Bones, and not of his Brains; yet 'tis certain they may claim a juſt right to it as well as Men, and ſometimes to wiſdom too; The coldneſs of their Temper is no argument to me of their ſtupidity or dulneſs; for beſides, that the melancholly, though cold, are commonly ingenious, This ſuppos'd coldneſs of their temper is often corrected by ſuch a degree of heat, as may improve them into real Wits. Their Bodies, I confeſs, are nōt of ſo cloſe a texture as thoſe of Men, as being both ſofter, and more moiſt: But in all this I ſee nothing inconſiſtent with their being really witty. And if we are not convinced as yet of this ſelf-evident truth by reaſon, daily experience may eaſily clear all our doubts. Speak they not to the purpoſe in a familiar converſe, and as good Senſe as moſt Men; yea, ſome of them can act the Philoſophers part, compoſe

poſe Books, and write Verſes too, not very impertinently. And if we will ſpeak our mind impartially, they have ſomewhat more of a ſuddain, and extemporary Wit than Men themſelves, who can ſpeak Sence, but after Meditation; whereas they talk ſometimes to the purpoſe, without being at the pains of much thinking. Shall we doubt of their acuteneſs, if we reflect but a moment upon their quick Reparties, in certain Rencounters, where in Men are like *Equus, & Aſinus quibus non eſt intellectus*, as dumb as Beaſts: And if the beauty of the Soul be proportionable to that of the Body; we have reaſon to think that as they exceed our Sex in the former, ſo they have ſome conſiderable advantage over us in the latter too, whereof they give ſometimes but too certain proofs, by circumventing, and impoſing upon the Greateſt Head pieces amongſt Men; which is nothing elſe but an ill uſe of a very good thing, their

Wit

Wit. *Sampſon* could neither be overcome, nor out-witted by the *Philiſtins*, but ſubtiler *Dalila* put a cheat upon him, that coſt him at laſt his life. *Solomon* was the wiſeſt Man of the Age he lived in, yet he was prevailed upon by the forcible perſwaſions of his Concubines to adore falſe Gods. *Abigail* with a ſhort *Harrangue* triumph'd over *David*'s warlike reſolutions. And *Adam* himſelf could not reſiſt the Rethorick of his Wife *Eve*, but ſubmitted to her as to his Maſter. So true it is that Women have out-witted the greateſt men in all ages, and for ought I know, the World turns yet round at their diſcretion. But nothing ſheweth more their Wit, than their ſubtile management of intrigues, whether of Love or Revenge; for they can diſſemble better than Hypocriſie it ſelf, and put what Face they pleaſe upon their Secret, and real Deſigns. I ſhall ſet down here on this occaſion what happened in *France* not many years ago,

ago, as being a true Fact, and no Romance; though becauſe of the oddneſs of the thing, it looks ſomewhat like one.

2. When the *French* King invaded *Holland* in the year 72. if I miſremember not, the Nobility, as 'tis uſual on ſuch occaſions, followed him by his expreſs Comand from all parts of the Kingdom: A Gentleman of a mean Fortune, but of Good Parentage, in obedience to his Soveraign, and beſides incouraged by a promiſe of ſome conſiderable Preferment, reſolved to leave his Lady, being marryed but Three Months before, and to hazard his life for the increaſe of his ſmall Fortune. But whether he was not very *Uxorious*, or which I am more apt to believe, had bin wholly taken up with Military Affairs, he never in the ſpace of Five years abſence inform'd her once what condition he was in. She began then to ſuſpect him killed in ſome rencounter. But all her doubts

were

were at length cleared by a Letter she received from one of his intimate Friends, who was very well informed of his continual Silence all the while of this long absence. He assured her then by his Letter of her Husbands death, because he judged his recovery out of a Distemper he was then in, impossible. He added, that he was coming to present her with her Husbands Diamond Ring, as a part of his last Will, and a mark of his most sincere Love and Affection towards her: And accordingly not thinking that his Friend could recover, sets forward for *France*. He failed not at his arrival to present the Lady with the Ring, and at the same time with his Sevice, if perchance she dislik't him not, as he profest he did not dislike her. She seem'd, as Women commonly do upon such occasions, to be somewhat shy at first, and surprized at his unexpected offer. But weary now of a solitary Life, and fearing she should not meet with

so

ſo good an opportunity again, ſhe thought it a piece of Prudence to lay hold on it; and ſo being at her Liberty, as ſhe thought, ſhe engaged within a few days to this Second Husband; who not uſing her near ſo kindly, as the firſt, though, as it ſhall appear hereafter, ſhe never really loved him neither; ſhe began to wiſh for a change, and that it would pleaſe God to rid her of this Husband as he had already delivered her of the Firſt when he recovering unexpectedly out of that Diſtemper, his Friend, but now his Rival, had left him in without any hopes of recovery, comes on a ſuddain home, not knowing any thing of his wifes ſecond Marriage. Being ſoon informed of the whole matter, and how innocently it had happened on her ſide, he appeared to be ſomewhat ſatisfied, and told her that he was ready to live with her again, if ſhe was willing to part with her preſent Husband, and however that the Law would

would right him in this case. It was accordingly ordered that she should leave her second Husband, and return to the first again, wherewith she appeared to be well satisfied, because of her hard usage from her second Husband: They liv'd then awhile together very contentedly, and he doted on her more than ever he did when he was first marryed: She failed not to use him likewise with all imaginable kindness, which so gain'd his heart, that he could not cross her in any thing; yea, not in such things as were neither lawful nor allowable. As he was still highly concerned if any thing should displease her, or put her in a melancholly temper, he inquired of her one day why she appeared to be somewhat dejected; how can I be other, replyed she, since I know certainly that you are in a greater danger then ever you was in the *Holland* Wars, because my second pretended Husband, as I am credibly inform'd, is resolved to mur-

murther you, that he may enjoy me again. I hear indeed he is going for *Burgundy*, but I know he will make but a ſhort ſtay there. So you may eaſily judge, that loving you as tenderly as I do, I ſhall never have a moment of Reſt either by Night or Day, till I be rid of my too well grounded fear, by preventing ſome-way this deſigned blow, which at once would kill two, and be the occaſion of a deſerved, though ſhameful death to a third, the Executioner himſelf, your Rival: Her Husband being extreamly ſurpriſed at this diſcourſe, knew not what to reſolve upon; but being near concern'd in the caſe, and loving her more than his life, he took a ſuddain reſolution to do whatever ſhe would put him upon. This ſubtile Lady taking notice of this yielding humour he was in, ſpoke to him thus again, or to this effect; you ſeem to be in doubt what you have to do: You muſt then reſolve, for I know your Rivals Humour

mour, and there is no middle, either to kill or be killed, and all wise men, methinks, will prefer the former before the latter: Now because I cannot suffer you to expose your self to the least hazard, I shall furnish you this Night with the fittest Opportunity that can be devised of doing your self, and me too, a most important piece of Service. Your Rival then will come about Six of the Clock, as he hath given me notice by a Letter, to take his leave of me before his departure for *Burgundy*, which civility I shall not only admit, but invite him likewise in your presence to Supper, under pretence of a pretended Reconciliation to be made up between him and you. The Gentleman comes as he had promis'd, and yielded with all his heart to their Civil offers, being now almost fully perswaded, that as in *Holland*, and *Flanders* he had had all things in Common with his Friend, this juncture would furnish him with an over-

overture to the like privacy at home, which was all that he either aim'd at, or car'd for. Before the Gentleman came to take his leave of the Lady, they had contrived, and agreed upon the manner of his Death, which was to preſs upon him ſeveral Healths, and when he ſhould be almoſt inſenſible of what was doing about him, to diſſolve ſome Strong and Heady *Saporifick* in his Wine, that ſo they might the more eaſily ſtrangle him; the Servants being firſt diſpatcht out of doors upon pretended Errants. The murther thus executed without reſiſtance or noiſe; the Lady took after this manner her meaſures for concealing this horrid fact, and hiding the Body from the eyes of the World. She deſired her Husband to take it upon his ſhoulders, while ſhe would bear up the Legs upon hers for his greater eaſe in carrying it. Thus they went quietly along together about Midnight by a back door through the Garden, ſtraight to the River

River that wash't the very walls thereof: But as they were thus in their March, the Lady tyed dexterously in more than one part, the dead Mans Cloaths with those of her living Husbands, which he, as being intent upon the compleating of the business, could neither mistrust, nor be sensible of. They were come near to the River, when she told him to go as near as he could, and being now upon the very brink of the precipice, she most unmercifully thrust him over, and so both headlong down together into the River. Thus she got her self rid of both her Husbands at once, whom it seems she had equally dislik't. It may be yet somewhat to my purpose to tell you, that being returned home, she made a great stir among her Servants, as if she had known nothing of the matter, and ask't them often if they had not met with her Husband and the other Gentleman, for that she fear'd they had chal-

challenged one another, and had gone to ſome remote place agreed upon, to put an end by the Sword to their old Quarrels: But though this was for a while the general opinion of the Town, the two Bodies being found two Months after by ſome Fiſher-men bound together, and the Lady being upon ſuſpicion apprehended, and according to the Laws of that Country, in ſuch doubtful caſes, threatned with extraordinary Tortures, if ſhe would not confeſs her crime: She made at length a full diſcovery of the whole matter: And ſuffered by the order of the Juſtice what ſhe had well deſervedan, infamous Death.

3. Let us make here but this one reflection: Could there be a greater wickedneſs than this, and at the ſame time a greater abuſe of Wit; whereby we ſee clearly that this weaker Sex has nothing of real Weakneſs when they reſolve upon a deſign, whether bad, as this was, or good, as that

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of *Judith*, who in my judgement cheated not *Holofernes* ſo ſubtilely out of his life, as this Woman did her two Husbands out of theirs.

I pretend not by this diſcourſe to puff Women up with Pride, for they are but too proud already; my deſign only is to ſhow that they ought not to be undervalued by Men, as if they were little better than Fools, and had no kind of real Wit; ſince their very Malice and Tricks do demonſtrate the contrary. But nevertheleſs, though it may be allowable to call ſome Women fine Wits, becauſe of ſome peculiar vivacity they are gifted with; yet few of them can pretend to be great Wits, ſuch a Character requiring a conſtant temper of the Soul, which they, becauſe of their changeable humour, are not capable of. I ſhall not perhaps be juſtly ſtyled impertinent, if I ſay, that ſince Wit depends moſt upon the perfection of our Souls, they have not received

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from God ſo perfect Souls as Men, becauſe by Gods ſpecial appointment they are to obey, and Men to command; they are to be Servants, and Men their Maſters: Now 'tis conformable to the Wiſdom of that *all wiſe being*, that as they are inferiour to us by the condition of their State, ſo they ſhould be likewiſe far ſhort of Men, as to the innate endowments of the Mind. Yet I deny not but that God may, and does ſometimes lodge a Soul of the Firſt *Hierarchy*, I mean a moſt perfect one in a Womans body; but this is not uſual, and ſeldom happens, but when he pleaſes to make choice of Women to rule over great Empires, and whole Nations, which hinders not the generality of them, from falling far ſhort of thoſe eminent abilities that men are deſervedly eſteemed for. I conceive the *French* to be more ſenſible of the truth of this Doctrine than moſt other Nations, becauſe by their *Salick* Law, Women can claim no right among

mong them to the Soveraign command. I ſhall not ſay, it would perhaps, prove to our great advantage, to put the ſame affront upon them by giving place to this Law amongſt us; but ſure I am that *England* would be no more a Purgatory for Men, as it is commonly ſaid to be, and would not ceaſe neither to be a Paradiſe for Women, if the *Salick Law* were once eſtabliſhed in every private Houſe and Family of this Kingdom.

SECT.

SECT. XV.

The witty Phisitian, or the chief Secret of Physick.

1. *How difficult a thing it is to become a good Physitian.*
2. *What is chiefly required in a good Physitian.*
3. *Why a man may know the whole* Materia medica, *and not be a good Physitian.*
4. *That the unsuccessfulness of, or harm done by a remedy, is rather to be ascribed to the Physitian, than to any defect in the Remedy it self.*

1. I Conceive no Art so hard to compass, as that which makes a true Physitian; Divinity it self compared to it is but a Play: For one may be a not insufficient Divine, if he can but discourse probably of what may be understood in our mysteries,

myſteries, and confeſs by an humble belief his ignorance of whatever is beyond the reach of his Capacity, whereby I mean that the moſt intricate difficulties, and miſteries of the Criſtian Religion may be eaſily ſurmounted by a blind ſubmiſſion of our Underſtandings unto Gods obſcure Revelation. But whether I conſider the Speculative, or practical part of Phyſick, I meet every where with inſuperable difficulties. I repreſent firſt to my ſelf whatever is contained in the *Three Kingdoms*, not of *England*, *Scotland* and *Ireland* only, but of Three of a far larger extent, the *Mineral*, the *Vegetative*, and the *Animal*: And on a ſuddain I fall into deſpair of ever underſtanding to the botttom the leaſt thing they contain: I can ſcarce fix in my dull head the very names of *Metals*, *Minerals*, *Plants* and *Animals*; and far leſs their infinite Properties, and Medicinal uſes. Reflecting again upon our corruptible

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Bodies, my Thoughts are put to a ſtand, when I am preſt to give a rational account either of their tempers, or diſtempers. Yet if I pretend to be but an ordinary Phyſitian, I muſt have a ſort of comprehenſive Knowledge of this Engine, our Soul moves, and of all its particular Motions; which being upon ſeveral accounts an inſuperable difficulty, what wonder if the ableſt Phyſitians miſtake not only ſometimes a mans diſtemper, but which is of a worſe conſequence, take ſometimes one for another: Becauſe two different Diſeaſes may have ſuch an affinity in their Symptoms, that they can pretend to no infallibility in diſtinguiſhing them. On the other ſide, when I conſider the obſcure Origine of moſt Diſtempers, I am quite out of humour with the Practice of Phyſick. I may but too eaſily miſtake that, without the Knowledge of which I cannot cure my *Patient*, the true cauſe of his diſeaſe; yea, I wonder

how any Man dare venture to ſtudy Phyſick, if he peruſe but a moment *Hypocrates* his firſt Aphoriſm, *Vita longa, ars brevis, occaſio celeris, experimentum difficile, judicium periculoſum*, Our life is too ſhort, and the Art is of an infinite extent, the occaſion gives us eaſily the ſlip; the Experience is hard, doubtful and dangerous, and it is not eaſie to diſcern well, either the Remedies, or the Diſtempers: We can have then but little certainty of the Cure, eſpecially if we take notice of what follows in the ſame Aphoriſm, *Oportet autem non modo ſeipſum exhibere quæ oportet facientem, ſed etiam ægrum ac præſentes, & externa*, that the Paticnts Recovery depends not only upon the Phyſitians care and skill, but no leſs upon the Patient himſelf, who muſt contribute towards his own eure by an exact ſubmiſſion, and ſcrupulous performance of what he is order'd to do, take, or obſerve. And beſides, all our endeavours are

uſe leſs,

uſeleſs, if thoſe that wait upon him do not their Duty, or if perchance thoſe things that the *Old Man* calls external, and are without us, as wholſom food, good air, *&c.* be wanting. Out of all this diſcourſe I raiſe the ſame inference that made my firſt propoſition in the beginning of this Section, That there is no ſmall difficulty to become a good Phyſitian; yet on the other part, one would think that there is nothing more eaſie, becauſe of the great number of Phyſitians to be met with every where, whom we know in all other reſpects to be but meer Blockheads. If the Knowledge of Phyſick were a thing ſo hard to attain to, and beyond the common reach, could either a Taylor, or a Shoemaker, and the reſt of the unlearned Tribe practice Phyſick, as able and Famous Doctors. I confeſs if there were no more required to be a Phyſitian than what the leſs underſtanding ſort, or the *Mobile* con-

ceives to be neceſſary, the whole World might ſoon be turn'd into a Colledge of Phyſitians: It is not then the Knowledge of a Receit, or two not unſucceſsful on ſome, or ſeveral occaſions that give us right to this honourable Tittle, nor the art of making up this or that Phyſical Compoſition, unleſs we will fooliſhly reckon up old doting Wives, and Apothecaries Prentices, with the ableſt Doctors. Yea, I maintain it to be no Paradox to ſay, that a man may comprehend perfectly the whole *Materia medica*, and an hundred good Remedies againſt every particular Diſtemper, and yet prove a very inſignificant, and ignorant Phyſitian too. Becauſe the chief Secret of Phyſick conſiſts not in the goodneſs of the Remedy, but in the due application thereof, with regard to time, place, the Temper of the Patient, and other Circumſtances. Who underſtands this, and no other, is a true Phyſitian, as be

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ing capable to cure the worſt diſtempers, by not very odd, nor far fetcht Remedies. Whether there be any *Panicea's*, or univerſal Remedies againſt all ſort of diſtempers, I ſhall not here examine; but ſure I am that *Opium* perhaps for diminiſhing of pain excepted; there are no ſuch found as yet: and though there were any of this Latitude, I would ſtill look npon them as meer Inſtruments that may miſcarry by the unskilfulneſs of thoſe that handle them. I am then ſenſible that ſeveral are quite miſtaken, when they complain that ſuch a Remedy did wrong their Bodies, or increaſe their Diſtempers, whereas the Phyſitian only is to be blamed; who, tho' he preſcribed a thing in it ſelf very good, neither underſtood the critical Minute it was to be given in, nor his Patients conſtitution, nor other Circumſtances which we muſt needs take notice of, elſe we may preſcribe the beſt remedies to no

purpoſe. A Phyſitians Wit then lyeth not in framing modiſh Receits, and preſcribing a numberleſs number of Remedies, whether *Chimical*, or *Galenical*, but in a certain practical judgement, which is not got in the Univerſities, of applying what is fitteſt for the cure of the Diſtemper, with regard to time, place, the ſtrength of the Patient, and other Circumſtances. I look therefore upon ſuch as ſell Secrets againſt all ſorts of diſtempers, to be meer Cheats; becauſe if their Remedies be indeed *Panacea's*, or Univerſal, this Character I allow not to be intrinſecal to them, but meerly extrinſecal, as derived from the practical Judgement of ſuch as preſcribe them ſucceſsfully, which as they cannot ſell, nor communicate, neither can they either ſell, or communicate their Secret: Hence we may conclude what a piece of imprudence, or rather madneſs it is, to take Remedies from the hands of meer Empericks,

pricks, without the advice of ſome Judicious Phyſitian; becauſe, as I was ſaying lately, our recovery depends not ſo much upon the goodneſs of the Remedy, as upon a due application thereof. For we are taught both by reaſon, and experience, that we may either kill or cure with the ſame Remedy differently applyed, and to different Subjects, or not in the ſame Circumſtances.

SECT. XVI.

The ingenious Art of Translating.

1. *The difficulty of a good Translation.*
2. *The Art of Translating compared to the Art of* Portraying.
3. *In which of the two Languages the Translator ought to excell, whether in that he translates from, or in that he translates in to.*
4. *The Faults and Mistakes of some Translators.*
5. *That good* Latine *Translations do always out-do the Originals.*

1. ONe would think that there is no great Wit, nor no very much art neither, in making of a good Translation; but how far they are deceived, we may easily conjecture by the infinite number of bad

bad Tranſlations done in this City: For as an Ingenious Gentleman did lately obſerve, ſome of the Tranſlators underſtand not the Language they Tranſlate from, others underſtand not the Language they Tranſlate into, and others again underſtand not the Subject they tranſlate: What wonder then if they fall not only often very ſhort of the Original, but beſides furniſh the World with ſuch imperfect Copies, as may ruine the repute of the Authors, in the judgement of thoſe that know them not. I conceive then, and require in a ingenious Tranſlator ſuch parts, as I fear we ſhall meet with but in a very ſmall Number. We muſt not then think that a man is qualified to make, for Inſtance, a good *Engliſh* Verſion out of *French*, becauſe he has ſtayed a year or two, or if you pleaſe, ſome years in *France*, unleſs he underſtand the very Criticiſm, and Tour of the Language, which can ſcarce be attained to, but

but by those who have been bred up from their greener years among the Politest sort of that Nation; and besides, have made good use of their time by writing, speaking, conversing, reading, and all such exercises as are the fittest for acquiring the perfect Knowledge of any Language. 'Tis then a piece of Simplicity in some Booksellers to make their application for the Translating of *French* Books, to such as have been but a year or two in *France*, or which is yet worse, have never stirr'd from home; tho' I grant they may by their private Study understand in some measure the French Tongue, yet I am sure that they never conceive aright the whole Energy, Pith and Delicacy of the Phrase; the knowledge whereof is so necessary, that without it, the version cannot but be very imperfect, and to the disadvantage of the Author. Most of those that translate Novels being sensible

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of their insufficiency as to this part, pass by, and supply what they understand not by some irregular Fancy of their own, and sometimes not very much fitted for the purpose. I conceive then the Art of Translating to be like unto that of Portraying. He is a very mean Painter, who can but represent the meer Lineaments, and external Shape of a Mans Face. The chief Secret of this Art consists in drawing to life the very Soul it self; I mean, in representing the very Air, Temper, Humour and Complection: For a Man is not drawn to Life, unless the most habitual indisposition of his Soul shine in the Piece. So I may proportionably say, to turn *French* into flat *English* precisely, is not beyond the reach of the meanest Capacity; but it is a piece of harder work than the unexperienc'd are aware of, to represent the Original to life: This requires, besides a ripe Judgement, an extraordinary quick-

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neſs of the Imagination, with an eaſie and ingenious utterance. And here I think it is not amiſs to enquire in which of the two languages the Tranſlator ought to excel, whether in that he tranſlates from, or in that he tranſlates into. I think it then no paradox to aſſert a perfect Knowledge of the former to be more neceſſary than that of the latter: my reaſon is, becauſe if I underſtand never ſo well the Tour, for inſtance, of the *Engliſh*; this will avail me but little, if I comprehend not that of the *French* likewiſe together with its whole Energy and Pith; for without this foreſaid Knowledge I ſhall never be able to make a true and Natural Copy of the Original, how Politely ſoever I do write in *Engliſh*. For a good *Engliſh Verſion* conſiſts not in the goodneſs of the Language, abſolutely conſidered in it ſelf, but reſpectively to the Original, which it muſt repreſent and equal, if poſſible, in all Senſe. On

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the other ſide, though I underſtand not ſo eminently the Language the Verſion is done into, yet if I be Maſter of the Language the Orignal is written in, I ſhall be capable of tranſlating it exactly and well. For in this caſe I ſhall be ſenſible of the leaſt expreſſion that ſhall fall ſhort of my Author, and ſo with a little more application I may reach him at length by changing the Phraſe or Expreſſion, which is not very uneaſie to do, till comparing the Original with the Copy, I find them nothing inferiour to each other, or rather as near as poſſibly they can be. A good Tranſlator then may in ſome reſpect be as much eſteemed, as the Author himſelf: For ſure I am that ſometimes the ingenious ſort find it a harder Task to tranſlate, than to write, or to invent themſelves: becauſe it is eaſier, no doubt, to expreſs our own thoughts, then thoſe of other Mens, which are often none of the cleareſt. Their obſcurity

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ſometimes prove a lawful excuſe for our miſtakes, but we can, under no pretence, ſhun a juſt and deſerved confuſion, if through our own ignorance we quite abuſe and miſrepreſent our Authors. I fear he was of this number who tranſlated, *Le pont Euxine*, the *Euxine Bridge*, in lieu of the *Euxine* or Black Sea, between *Mœotis* and *Tenedos*, as alſo that other, who tranſlates thus the receit of an eminent Phyſitian, *Repulveris panonici Rubri, &c. take of the Powder of Red Cloath Two Ounces*, as if *Panonicus* was derived from the *Latine* Word *Pannus*, Cloath, and not from *Pannonia*, the name of a Country.

3. I ſhall in this place take notice of what but few perhaps reflect upon, that as the living Languages of *Europe* are but *Jargons* compared to the *Latine*, ſo all Books done out of *French*, *Spaniſh*, *Italian*, *&c.* into *Latine* by an accurate, and Polite Pen, and in a true and Natural Style,

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are always far beyond the Original: becauſe this Language carryeth along with it a certain Energy that no other reacheth. I ſhall give you a proof of what I ſay by tranſlating theſe enſuing Verſes to demonſtrate to you the wide difference between thoſe two Languages. The Four firſt were penn'd by a Man more eſteemed by ſome than he deſerves. The Anſwer was made by an Eminent *Virtuoſo*, and a Famous Philoſopher, of whom I have ſpoken ſeveral times in this Treatiſe.

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The Deists *Plea.*

NAtural, Religion easie first, and plain,
Tales made it mystery, Offerings made it gain;
Sacrifices, and Feasts were at length prepar'd,
The Priests eat Roast-meat, and the People star'd.

The Christians Plea.

NAtural Religion does indeed display
The duty of serving God, but not the way;
Man of himself, fickle, perverse and blind,
A Precipice sooner than a way could find;
What Worship God will have, himself must teach,
And so he did by those he sent to preach.
Who Doctrines worthy to be thought Divine,
Confirm'd by Miracles where his Power did shine;
(And by those wonders, instances did give
Of things as strange, as they bid us believe)
Who profer'd endless joys; but lives requir'd,
Worthy of Men that to such joys aspir'd;
Who what they taught, so much believ'd and priz'd,
That for its sake they all things else dispis'd,
And both by its strict Rules, their lives did guide,
And to attest its Truths, most gladly dy'd,
And without Arms subdu'd the World; save those
Whom to clear Truths (not parts, but) Vice made Foes.

Deiſmi Defenſio.

INſita naturæ, facilis primum, obvia cunctis
Relligio; ſimul ac pia fraus miſteria ſinxit,
Protinus illa pium, ſit per pia munera, lucrum,
Victima cæſa cadit, convivia opima parantur,
Optima quæque vorat, populo ſpectante, Sacerdos.

Chriſtianiſmi Defenſio.

INſita naturæ pietas ſervire Tonanti
Relligioque jubent: methodum, ſed neutra, modumq;
Edocet: hanc methodum, nullo monſtrante, modumve
Nemo ſciat: malus, & fragilis quoque, cæcus, ubique
Mille modos mortis, pereundi mille Figuras
Invenies citius, quam qua ratione colendus
Sit Deus: ipſe modum hunc doceat Deus, ipſe docebit
Et docuit, quoties veteres docuere Prophetæ,
Præconeſque novi, qua ſit ratione colendus,
Divino quoties Oracula digna ſigillo
Expoſuere Gregi: tot, quæ, miracula firmant
Divinæ virtutis opus: prægrandibus ipſi
Ut dicta æquarent factis, tam mira patrarunt
Quam, quæ, mira, fides docuit: ſed et ampla merenti
Præmia promiſere, & gaudia neſcia finis
Gaudia, quæ puram poſcant ſine crimine vitam,
Et quæ perpetuis ad gaudia talia votis
Hinc aſpirantes deceat, doceatque nepotes:
Quod docuere, fide pariter tenuere, fideſque
Doctrinæ par uſque fuit: ſed & illius ergo
Sub pede calcarunt ſtudia in contraria vulgus
Quicquid agit, cæciſque animos ardoribus urget.
Vivendi quoque Norma fides his extitit: ipſam
Sanguine ſignarunt læti, dum morte probarent,
Armatumque orbem Gens hæc ſuperaret inermis,
Hos tantum excipias Clariſſima dogmata contra
Quos non ingenium, ſed mens male conſcia movit.

Now

Now compare the *Original* with the *Verſion*, and if you underſtand the one as well as the other, you ſhall, I doubt not, confeſs, that the latter as being more expreſſive than the former, offers to your thoughts a fuller Idea of the Authors meaning than they themſelves could expreſs in this inferiour Dialect.

I apprehend then *Horace*, *Virgil*, *Ovid*, and other Primitive Maſters of the *Latine* Tongue to be wrong'd and weakned by the very beſt Tranſlators, becauſe they appear now in a Diſguiſe, and under a borrowed Apparrel, and not ſo Majeſtical neither as they firſt appeared in. Yet if we undertake for the Common Good, ſuch ſort of Tranſlations, we are to obſerve exactly this one Precept above all others, *to expreſs the full Sence of the Author*, without a too ſcrupulous regard to every particular Word and particle, unleſs it be judged material to the expreſſing of his intent, and meaning.

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